

Avian influenza — Protect against infection and prevent the virus from spreading

According to the BC Centre for Disease Control, avian influenza (flu) has been transmitted in rare cases from birds to humans and from humans to humans. Because of this possible health risk, it is important to protect humans against exposure to avian flu.

What is avian influenza?

Avian flu is a viral disease that affects poultry and, in some cases, humans. There are several strains of avian flu, which are closely related to human influenza.

What if an outbreak occurs on my farm?

If you suspect a bird in your flock is infected with avian flu, you must take immediate action.

Every farm in British Columbia is required to follow the *BC Poultry Biosecurity Reference Guide*.

This document describes mandatory biosecurity protocols, including how to develop a standard operating procedure (SOP) for self-quarantine.

Make sure everyone follows your enhanced biosecurity protocols for entering and leaving contaminated areas. The *BC Poultry Biosecurity Reference Guide* and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) can help you define the necessary enhancements.

An outbreak will also require the use of safe work procedures and personal protective equipment (PPE), including respiratory protection for workers.

It is very important that no birds or materials be taken from suspected infection areas. All materials, equipment, and people coming out of such areas must be decontaminated. Do not enter contaminated areas, if possible. If you must enter, follow the direction of CFIA.

How can I protect myself and others during an outbreak?

Implement your SOP for self-quarantine, use enhanced PPE, and follow instructions from CFIA and the Fraser Health Authority. Review these items with your workers and make sure they have any necessary training.

Restrict access

Limit and restrict access to contaminated areas, flocks, and materials, as specified in the *BC Poultry Biosecurity Reference Guide*. Access should be limited to essential services only and as directed by your veterinarian and CFIA.

Wash hands

Hand washing and standard biosecurity protocols are very important. Anyone who has been in close contact with infected animals or contaminated surfaces must wash their hands immediately. Also wash hands after removing gloves and other PPE. Hands must be washed thoroughly with soap and water for 15–20 seconds.

Use personal protective equipment

PPE minimizes the risk of infection. Anyone entering an area where there is a risk of exposure must wear PPE. This includes activities related to the destruction and disposal of flocks, as well as cleaning and disinfecting buildings, structures, and equipment.

Use the following PPE:

- Rubber boots or protective foot covers that are disinfected or disposed of
- Disposable coveralls, along with head covering, worn over cotton coveralls and taped to boot covers
- Disposable nitrile gloves taped at the wrists to disposable coveralls
- Chemical safety goggles (not just safety glasses)
- Respirators

PPE requirements

In addition to the personal protective equipment listed above, a respirator is required when entering the “hot zone” of a suspected infected farm. The minimum recommendation is a disposable particulate respirator (for example, an N95) used as part of a comprehensive respiratory protection program. Based on the hazards associated with wet cleaning and disinfecting chemicals, you will likely need to use a NIOSH-approved full-face respirator with combination P100/organic vapour cartridges for particulates and organic vapours (as a minimum).

Workers must be clean shaven and fit tested for the model and size of respirator. Workers must also be trained to do a seal check to make sure the face piece seals with the face.

Other PPE requirements include the following:

- Discard of disposable PPE properly in sealed plastic bags.
- Clean and disinfect reusable or non-disposable PPE.
- Wash hands after removing PPE.
- Ensure that workers are trained in proper techniques for putting on, removing, and disposing of PPE.

Contact WorkSafeBC

If you have an outbreak of avian flu on your farm, you are required to notify WorkSafeBC — call 604.276.3100. A WorkSafeBC prevention officer will phone you to confirm the required safe work practices that must be followed by you and your workers, including contractors.

Other resources

BC Poultry Biosecurity Reference Guide

www.agf.gov.bc.ca/ahc/poultry/biosecurity.pdf

NIOSH Alert — Protecting Poultry Workers from Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2008-113/pdfs/2008-113.pdf

Best Practice Guideline for Workplace Health & Safety During Avian Influenza

work.alberta.ca/documents/WHS-PUB_bp003.pdf

Contact FARSHA for advice on prevention procedures and training workers.

farsha.bc.ca/contact-us/

Contact your regional health authority for medical advice.

www.health.gov.bc.ca/socsec/provmap.html