

Avian influenza and its preventive measures

Signs of avian influenza in poultry birds: Lack of coordination (including inability to walk and stand) ruffled feathers, difficulty in breathing, loss of appetite, depression and droopiness, bluish coloring of wattles and comb oedema and swelling of head, eyelids, comb, wattles, hocks, watery diarrhea, small hemorrhages (most visible on feet and shanks), signs of blood in nose discharge, sudden fall in egg production eggs with soft shells.

Animal-to-animal infection

1. Guidelines for poultry rearers

A. Good hygienic practices help to protect our flock against avian influenza.

Avian influenza can enter our farm while introducing new poultry, through infected droppings brought in from the outside by shoes, dirty cages and wheels (of bicycles, cars, etc.). Avian influenza can also be transmitted between different species (e.g. from poultry to pigs, cats, dogs) - ducks can become infected with avian influenza without showing any symptoms, and then transmitting it to chickens.

Poultry which are sick or have died as a result of avian influenza can be very dangerous for our family and community. When poultry farm becomes infected due to outbreak of avian influenza, we must increase all preventive measures with sick/dead poultry in the neighborhood.

B. How to protect our birds

First of all separate the existing flock for at least 2 weeks. Separate from domestic ducks and geese, wild birds and from other livestock species. Water and feed sources should be protected as they attract wild birds. Separation of birds that appear to be/are sick from the rest of the flock and other animals. Strict hygiene condition needs to be maintained. Water source to be protected as it may contain (wild) bird droppings. Unsold poultry from the market taken for selling should be separated from other animals, especially younger poultry. We must vaccinate our flock against other diseases (such as Newcastle disease, IB.D etc.)

C. Isolation of farm

Borrowing of equipment or vehicles from other farms should be restricted and all the means of transport should be kept outside the farm premises. Restrict the numbers of visitors, wash the wheels of vehicle and bottom of the shoes at the farm entrance and pens and cages coming from outside. Farmyard and equipment should be cleaned thoroughly at least once a week.

D. Guidelines for sick or dead birds

Report of sick or dead birds should be immediately made to the veterinary authorities (or local equivalent). Dead animals and birds should not be thrown into rivers,

lakes or other bodies of water. Put the dead birds in the plastic bag away from the rest of the flock and out of reach of children and others. Disposal of bird carcasses should be left to the veterinary authorities (or local equivalent). Eating and selling of dead birds should be stopped.

In case we have to bury the birds then burying them deeply enough so that dogs, cats and other scavengers cannot reach them. Burn or bury feathers and other waste away from our farmyard.

E. Guidelines during outbreaks

Do not visit other farms, avoid visitors, and don't bring any new animals or birds.

2. For those who sell poultry

Traders should respect bans on the movement of poultry and poultry products because Commercial movement of infected poultry or poultry products is one of the main ways of spreading avian influenza. We can spread avian influenza in our area by visiting an infected farm and then passing on the disease to others through infected droppings on shoes, dirty cages and wheels (of bicycles, cars, etc.).

A. Sell only healthy birds

Traders should sell birds of known origin (only birds that are certificated/ from a trusted source) and only healthy birds and should adoption all in/all out management system (sell all animals at the same time and buy animals in one single batch)

B. Avoid transportation in affected areas

Traders should respect the ban on poultry movement and advice of veterinarians should be respected which will help them to control the disease and lead to lifting of the ban.

C. Business should be done at farm entrance

All the business activity by traders should be done at the farm entrance to avoid infection. Any vehicle entering the farms, wheels should be cleaned and persons entering farm should clean the sole of the shoes.

D. Guidelines for animal health service personnel

Animal health service personnel are more prone of transmitting the virus as they carry the virus on their clothes/shoes by visiting an infected farm and then passing on the disease to others. In order to avoid infection they should leave their means of transport at the entrance of the farm and should use protective clothing for culling operations and vaccination of poultry. Destroying of dead/culled birds should be done by burning or deep burying and after each visit to a farm they should dispose off their apron, clean and disinfect their equipment and boots.

Animal-to-human infection for everyone

The avian influenza virus

can be transmitted through contact with poultry, and their droppings, feathers, intestines and blood. It is very important to minimize contact with poultry and wild birds. The greatest risk of infection is through the handling and slaughtering of live infected poultry. Children are particularly vulnerable, and should be kept away from poultry and do not allow them to pick up feathers or eggs. The following points should be considered

1. Report of sick or dead birds

Report of sick or dead birds should be sent to relevant authorities

2. Avoid contact with infected birds

Eating touching of sick or dead poultry should be avoided, children should not be allowed to touch or play with sick or dead birds, or touch/pick up bird feathers, selling and movement of birds from flocks that have come from an affected area should be stopped. Do not drink unboiled / untreated water from ponds/wells where birds (poultry or wild birds) may have left droppings and do not swim in water (such as lakes, rivers) used by wild birds.

3. High hygienic standards and signs of avian influenza should be ensured

While coughing or sneezing cover your mouth and nose, and learn the signs of avian influenza in humans such as: very difficult breathing, fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, eye infections. Avoid contact with some one who is infected, don't share the same room or bed and take the person for proper check up. If state of alert is indicated, follow all official warnings and indications as a precautionary measure, avoid crowded places and unnecessary human contact.

For poultry keepers

The avian influenza virus can be transmitted through contact with poultry, and their droppings, feathers, intestines and blood. It is very important to minimize contact with poultry and wild birds. The greatest risk of infection is through the handling and slaughtering of live infected poultry. The following points should be considered

1. Continuous close contact with poultry to be avoided.

2. Special care of children and pregnant women should be taken so that they don't come in contact with poultry birds.

3. Report sick or dead birds should be done immediately to the relevant authorities.

4. Be careful when handling sick or dead birds and don't touch the birds with bare hands and place the birds in plastic bags and clean the area.

5. Sick or dead birds should not be thrown into rivers, lakes or other bodies of water such as ponds/wells

and wait for the authorities for disposal of carcass. Do not eat and sell the carcass of a dead bird.

6. If you dispose of dead birds yourself then get rid of carcasses safely by burning them or burying them deeply enough that dogs, cats and other scavengers cannot reach them and burn or bury feathers and other waste away from your farmyard.

7. Ensure high hygienic standards (at home and in public) i.e. After working with, touching or taking care of poultry wash your hands and farm equipment thoroughly. Cover your nose and mouth with a clean cloth/face mask. Reduce the numbers of labours and after work, remove the shoes outside the house and clean them thoroughly after removing any mud or dust.

8. Take care when slaughtering poultry/game birds. Cover your nose and mouth with a clean cloth/face mask and be very careful and don't come in contact with feathers, blood, intestines, etc. Wash your hands thoroughly and clean the slaughtering place thoroughly

For cullers

Culling is a very dangerous activity due to the high risk of becoming infected with avian influenza. The avian influenza virus can be transmitted through contact with poultry, and their droppings, feathers, intestines and blood. It is very important to minimize contact with poultry and wild birds. Take care when culling poultry.

For hunters

Wild birds can carry the avian influenza virus without showing any symptoms and before an epidemic is detected in the area. If the virus is in an area, it is possible that all surrounding wild birds carry the virus. The avian influenza virus can be transmitted through contact with wild birds, and their droppings, feathers, intestines and blood. Hunting dogs retrieve game in their mouths and are therefore very exposed to the virus carried by infected game birds. Avoid or minimize the use of hunting dogs if the avian influenza virus is in the area.

1. Take care when slaughtering wild birds. Cover your nose and mouth with a clean cloth/face mask (PPE if available). Use gloves, be very careful and keep contact with feathers, blood, intestines, etc. to a minimum. Wash your hands and Clean the culling place thoroughly. All the left over to be disposed off by burning or deep burying and do not allow dogs or other animals to come into close contact with leftovers

2. Avoid contact between wild birds and poultry so that infection is minimum.

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