August 2026

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Egg Farmers of Canada
Les Producteurs d'œufs du Canada
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Turkey Farmers of Canada
Les Éleveurs de dindon du Canada
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Canadian Hatching Egg Producers
Les Producteurs d'œufs d'incubation du Canada
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Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors
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Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Vaccination

Frequently Asked Questions

With shifting transmission patterns and HPAI cases continuing across the globe, the conversation around the use of HPAI vaccines has been intensifying. This FAQ is intended to provide some context to the HPAI vaccination discussion in Canada. While this information represents the current context, this is a rapidly developing area, and the response could change accordingly.

Why can't we use HPAI vaccines like regular vaccines?

Implementing an HPAI vaccination program is complex, and considerations include vaccine efficacy and availability, logistics, surveillance, costs, and potential trade implications. The issue is that unlike other diseases, HPAI is a reportable disease and as such Canada needs to abide by international standards and expectations from importing countries.

Are there HPAI vaccines approved in Canada?

Yes, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has conditionally licensed three avian influenza vaccines:

- Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health VAXXITEK HVT+IBD+H5 HVT vaccine
- Ceva Animal Health VECTORMUNE HVT AIV HVT vaccine
- Zoetis Avian Influenza Vaccine, H5N2 Subtype, killed vaccine

These vaccines are restricted to government sanctioned programs and can only be used with the authorization of CFIA.

Research is ongoing to determine other vaccine types and their suitability, as well as considerations for extra label use of vaccinations.

Where would HPAI vaccines be used?

HPAI vaccines are not for routine use. Any use of HPAI vaccines would be in a targeted manner in high-risk regions with high-risk species. Any HPAI vaccination program would need to be approved and overseen by the CFIA.

Targeted species would include longer-lived birds and high-risk sectors (layers, broiler breeders, turkeys, or ducks). Broiler chickens are not currently being discussed as a target for HPAI vaccination.

Are vaccines THE solution?

Vaccines are one part of an integrated program of biosecurity, surveillance and stamping-out. HPAI vaccines work by increasing a bird's resistance to becoming infected; therefore, reducing the number of birds that would become infected. Secondly, they work by reducing the amount of virus shed into the environment by infected birds. Both help to reduce the spread of the virus. They can also reduce clinical signs of disease.

The performance and effectiveness of the vaccination will need to be monitored through surveillance.

Even with vaccine use, biosecurity remains an integral component of disease mitigation to keep HPAI out of the barn. All infected flocks need to be part of the stamping-out policy, regardless of if they are vaccinated or not.

Why is surveillance of HPAI vaccinated flocks necessary?
International standards via the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) require surveillance of vaccinated flocks. Even when vaccines are used, there is the possibility that vaccinated flocks may become infected and exhibit few to no clinical signs, but still shed and transmit the virus. For this reason, robust surveillance programs are needed to confirm the absence of active infection and provide trading partners with the confidence that HPAI infections are being effectively detected, controlled and stamped-out. One consideration in choosing a vaccine is that it must be DIVA-compliant (Differentiating Infected from Vaccinated Animals) so that vaccinated and infected flocks can be identified properly.

Surveillance measures are the most expensive element of an HPAI vaccination program. Currently, the European surveillance plan is considered the international gold standard for an HPAI vaccination plan. The plan, which France implemented, included passive and active surveillance with weekly dead bird surveillance swabs collected by farmers or technicians, and monthly swabs and blood samples by veterinarians and a clinical examination. Given the costs and field experience to date, the extent of the surveillance program has been adjusted, shifting towards more passive surveillance with dead bird sampling. In 2026, Europe announced an update to their regulations, which changes the frequency and timing of the surveillance.

Recommendations on surveillance requirements continue to be evaluated and refined based on experience, and WOAH will be performing a renewed evaluation within the coming year.

Why are there trade implications when using HPAI vaccination?
Trade has emerged as a barrier to HPAI vaccination world-wide. The issue is the risk that importing countries could impose trade barriers—like extra regulations—on poultry products and genetics. While international standards from the WOAH do allow HPAI vaccination in some cases, each country that imports our products can set its own rules and may require its own risk assessment to ensure the products are safe before allowing them in.

The animal health concern is that “silent infections” could be circulating amongst vaccinated poultry, and that HPAI viruses could be circulated via trade. This is why effective traceability, surveillance and stamping-out programs are required to provide confidence to importing countries. In most cases, vaccinated flocks and poultry products are allowed only for domestic use.

Are there international experiences with HPAI vaccination?
Yes, there have been recent HPAI vaccination pilots and programs. France launched a mandatory HPAI vaccination program for all fattening ducks in October 2023 following successful trials. France did experience trade implications upon beginning their HPAI vaccination program. For example, Canada and the U.S. implemented bans on all poultry imports until further assessments could be conducted. Trade of poultry and poultry products from unvaccinated flocks resumed in early 2025. France has seen success with its vaccination campaign and reported a reduction in the number of cases. In the 2025/2026 season, there were some outbreaks in vaccinated flocks, where challenge was particularly high or where vaccination and protection was incomplete.

The Netherlands conducted an HPAI vaccination field trial to assess the effectiveness of vaccination on layer flocks. The researchers concluded that vaccination is an effective additional strategy for controlling avian influenza in poultry.

Other countries have also recently announced trials. The United Kingdom (UK) started trials in March 2026, focusing on turkeys. The trial will evaluate how vaccines could be safely and effectively integrated into the UK’s disease control strategy and generate data on vaccine efficacy. Also, Italy started

a pilot vaccination program against HPAI in May 2026. The program involves a small number of selected farms and targets the most vulnerable poultry categories, specifically meat turkeys and egg-laying hens.

The U.S. poultry and egg industry has also developed a strategy, titled *Proposed U.S. Poultry and Egg Industry Vaccination Plan for HPAI*, to advance discussions towards the emergency use of vaccination. These conversations are ongoing.

What is Canada doing on HPAI vaccination?
The CFIA, in collaboration with provincial partners and the poultry industry, is conducting a confined field trial to better understand the logistics and effectiveness of administering HPAI vaccination in poultry. Canada's HPAI vaccination confined field trial is a small-scale, carefully controlled initiative that applies vaccination in poultry farm settings to assess how vaccines can be delivered and perform in practice, while managing potential impacts on animal health, surveillance, and trade. Up-to-date information from CFIA on the trial and other topics related to HPAI vaccination is available on their HPAI vaccination webpage.

What will the Canadian trial look like?
The confined field trial will involve two commercial poultry farms in Manitoba. The first phase began on August 3, 2026, at an egg farm. A turkey operation is expected to join the trial in early 2027. The vaccines for this trial were previously approved by CFIA and will be tested in different combinations.

Samples will be collected to measure antibodies, and birds will be moved to containment facilities at the national lab for virus challenges to determine the effectiveness of vaccines. Surveillance will be conducted in accordance with European regulations, including weekly dead bird swabs and monthly live bird surveillance to ensure freedom from HPAI.

International engagement was a big focus of the planning to ensure trading partners were on side with the trial design. To ensure trading partners' comfort, table eggs and turkey meat from vaccinated birds will remain on the domestic market but will not be exported outside Canada to align with current trade requirements. Food products from vaccinated animals are safe for consumers.

Findings from the trial will help inform future decisions about the use of HPAI vaccination in Canada.

What will this mean for the future of HPAI vaccination in Canada?
While vaccination may become a useful tool in the future, no formal decision on Canada's vaccine strategy has been made. With the results of the trial, the Canadian government, provincial partners and industry will have a better idea of the feasibility, logistics, costs and potential outcomes of an HPAI vaccination program. This information could serve to inform a broader vaccination plan, should Canada decide to implement vaccination as part of its response to HPAI.