



Avian Flu FAQ

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Goal of Presentation: a guide to answering client questions, show resources for solving sick bird dilemmas, Avian Flu update: Summer 2022

General Guidelines for Answering Questions about Avian Health:

FAQ: What should I do if someone asks me about sick birds?

- Please direct clients to [Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory \(VDL\) website](#)
- The VDL home page has links to avian flu updates and general information
- Browsing through the Bird Health info may help the client decide whether to reach out for more help (if they do not have internet, go to the VDL home page and see if you can find what they need)

FAQ: How can clients tell if HPAI might be present? Please ask them:

- a. **Are poultry dying suddenly?** *Losing a few birds over an extended period (days, weeks) is not indicative of HPAI, but sudden death of several poultry could be consistent with HPAI.*
- b. **Is there known exposure to wild waterfowl?** *Is your flock near areas where wild waterfowl are found? Are your birds free-range?*

**If they answer “yes” to both questions, have them contact the
HPAI Response team at 866.536.7593
Otherwise, have them call UMVDL at 207.581.3874**

What about MAIL-A-BIRD? How it Works:

- You may have shipping boxes for sending bird cadavers to the UM VDL at your Extension office: these can only be given out **IF the state vet has authorized** their use. Not sure? Please call the state veterinarian or the UM VDL to find out whether that client's bird should be in the "MAIL-A-BIRD" program.
- **If the state vet OK's it for use:**
 - Your office should NOT handle the bird. Have your office send the box to the client (or have the client come pick up the box).
 - The client can bring the box home, or to a safe place, to package the bird via our VDL instructions and ship it to the VDL using FedEx or Overnight Priority.

Submitting Any Samples to the VDL:

1. Immediately after death, chill and double-bag the deceased animal in Ziplocs.
2. Transport to the lab (call 581-3874 prior to bringing/sending animal).
3. If more than 24 hours between death and necropsy, freeze the cadaver.
4. Include the appropriate accession form (production animal, companion animal, or specific sample type form from the VDL website), sealed inside another Ziploc.
5. Send shipments in a box acceptable to the shipper (check their site or office).
Samples MUST NOT LEAK.
6. At least one frozen, reusable ice pack should be packed inside a separate, sealed Ziploc and placed inside the box along with absorbent material.
7. Once the accession form, samples, ice packs, and absorbent material are loaded in the styrofoam box, seal it with tape. Then place the address label (with our address, and your return address) and a "diagnostic sample" label on the surrounding cardboard box, and ship.

REMEMBER: Samples must be shipped promptly or delivered directly to the laboratory on a weekday; use FedEx or Overnight Priority via USPS.

Concerns for Humans: Some strains of HPAI can be dangerous to people, but as of summer 2022, the strain in North America does not make people sick. However, **when handling sick or dead birds, use COVID-type precautions: wear a mask and gloves, wash your hands after handling the bird, and be careful of leakage and poorly bagged birds.** Items that may have contacted HPAI-infected birds can be disinfected with dilute bleach.

- [List M: Registered Antimicrobial Products with Label Claims for Avian Influenza \(U.S. EPA\)](#)

HPAI in Maine 2022: UMaine VDL diagnosed the first case in Maine in February 2022. H5N1 is the strain that was found in Canada and on the East Coast in 2022.

WHY WORRY: over 40 million poultry died due to HPAI and eradication efforts, possibly zoonotic, many home farms are being affected the same as commercial farms.

BIOSECURITY: Keep poultry SEPARATE from wild birds, or places wild birds hang out.

If there is one important point, it's the concept of biosecurity. Just as we all kept a bit of distance from each other at the start of the COVID outbreak, we should keep distance between our poultry and wild birds (or areas where they hang out, like ponds and pastures). HPAI can survive for at least weeks in bird manure, and in water where ducks and geese have been.

Use caution to avoid any transmission of viruses from dead or dying birds: if they are wild birds, notify your regional warden or IFW rather than trying to approach them. If your own birds are found dead, wear disposable gloves and a mask when bagging them for further testing; dispose of those gloves/masks securely.