



# Protecting Your Backyard Flock from Avian Flu

Written by: Twila Parish-Short, MEd., Science Educator

May 2025

## What is Avian Influenza?

Avian influenza is caused by a virus that naturally occurs in wild birds, particularly waterfowl. These birds can carry the virus without showing symptoms and spread it through saliva, nasal secretions, and droppings. When domestic birds come into contact with the virus, it can cause severe illness and death.



*A backyard flock*

## Signs of Avian Flu in Poultry

**Keep an eye out for:**

- Sudden death with no warning signs
- Lack of energy or appetite
- Decreased egg production
- Swelling around the head, neck, and eyes

- Coughing, sneezing, or nasal discharge
- Diarrhea

If you notice any of these symptoms, report them immediately to your local veterinarian or agricultural agency.

## How to Protect Your Flock

### 1. Limit Exposure to Wild Birds

- Keep food and water indoors or under cover.
- Secure your coop and run with netting or wire to keep wild birds out.

### 2. Practice Good Biosecurity

- Wash hands and change shoes before and after handling your birds.
- Use separate clothing and tools for your flock.
- Don't share equipment or birds with other bird owners.

### 3. Don't Introduce New Birds Without Quarantine

- Keep new birds isolated for at least 30 days before introducing them to your flock.

#### 4. Keep Your Coop Clean

- Regularly clean and disinfect feeders, waterers, and housing.
- Dispose of droppings properly and keep bedding dry.

## What to do if you suspect Avian Flu

If your birds seem sick or you suspect an outbreak:

- Do **not** move birds off your property.
- Contact your state veterinarian or USDA's toll-free number: **1-866-536-7593**.
- Limit access to your property and follow official instructions carefully.

## Stay Informed

Avian flu cases can rise seasonally, especially during migration periods. Stay updated with alerts from your state agriculture department or local extension office.

By taking simple, proactive steps, you can help prevent the spread of avian flu and ensure the safety of your flock and your community.

---

*This information is brought to you by Delaware 4-H and the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension, a service of the UD College of Agriculture and Natural Resources — a land-grant institution. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*