

Below is from Jim Chakeres, Executive Vice President of the Ohio Poultry Association

Good afternoon. I have received a few calls today asking about COVID-19 and how it affects poultry and poultry meat/eggs. I reached out to the Food Animal Health Research team at the Ohio State University asking for a statement we could use, if needed. Drs. Y.M. Saif, Linda Saif and Chang Won Lee are respected virologists. Dr. Linda Saif serves as the WHO Animal Corona Virus expert.

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Brief, Direct Statement

There is no evidence that the newly emerged COVID-19 can affect poultry and that includes eggs, and chicken and turkey meat. These products are safe for human consumption.

Expanded Statement

Coronaviruses that commonly affect poultry does not jump to humans or vice versa.

Coronaviruses (CoVs) are a large group of viruses which continuously circulate in mammals and birds. The major CoVs in poultry, infectious bronchitis viruses (IBVs) and turkey coronaviruses (TCoVs), belong to genera gammacoronaviruses which is quite different from alpha- and beta-CoVs that infect humans and other mammals including current COVID-19. There is no report of transmission of avian gammacoronaviruses to humans or other mammals. There is no report of human coronavirus transmission to poultry, either.

New coronaviruses have been identified in 2009 in birds of the Passeriformes order and named deltacoronavirus. We currently do not know the prevalence of deltacoronavirus in poultry and its impact on poultry health. Again, there is no report of avian deltacoronavirus transmission to humans.

Detailed Statement

Coronaviruses (CoVs) are a group of viruses that affect animals and people and cause respiratory or enteric infections. Some of these viruses can transmit between animals and people (zoonotic) and between animal species. Others are more species specific and not known to transmit to other species. The first CoV discovered is infectious bronchitis virus (IBV) of chickens which does not transmit to mammalian species. Besides IBV, turkey CoV (TCoV) is another CoV that causes enteritis in turkeys. This virus could transmit to a mammalian species, but its potential impact is unknown. A CoV designated delta coronavirus infects wild birds and its impact or incidence in poultry is not known. One other mammalian CoV was shown to infect turkeys in experimental condition.

The newly discovered CoV designated COVID-19 originated from animals, jumped the species barrier and is causing the current pandemic in people. Obviously, there is concern about the ability of the virus to infect other species. At this point, there is no evidence that COVID-19 can affect avian species including poultry.

It should be emphasized that the effect of the COVID-19 on the poultry industry is not related to bird infection. Nonetheless, concern about industry labor and possible interruption because of sickness or quarantines are of concern.

Chang Won Lee, DVM, PhD Professor

Y.M. Saif, DVM, PhD Professor Emeritus

Linda J. Saif, PhD
Distinguished University Professor WHO COV Expert