

Guidance for On-Farm Activities In an Avian Influenza Outbreak

While every farm and situation is different, below are some points for egg farms to consider following a positive finding of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) on commercial egg farms, especially for those directly affected by HPAI.

Possible Activism

Animal rights activists may try to get access to your farm operations through trespass, protest or hiring. Be mindful of the following, and strongly encourage farm employees to be aware of their surroundings:

- Ensure that any hiring / screening processes are strictly enforced; if possible, avoid hiring new employees during this time
- Watch for unknown vehicles on your farm or adjacent property and look for any identifying information
- Consider adding security personnel to monitor grounds and entrances
- Be especially vigilant about access to your farm during certain activities, such as mortality management or depopulation
- Empower (and require) employees to report any unusual or suspicious behavior to a supervisor

Media Onsite & Interview Requests

Media will be looking for opportunities to add “visuals” to their story. They may ask for an interview or may arrive at your farm unannounced. Here are some suggestions for media engagement if they are onsite:

- Be polite, but firm. Remain calm.
- Provide options to media, if desired. You can meet with them at an offsite location for an interview, or provide photos or video of your farm, if available. *Consider referring them to a member of the AEB/UEP joint crisis team.*
- Have alternate interview subjects to offer, such as an AEB/UEP representative, a third-party animal health expert, your farm veterinarian or regulatory official.
- Practice biosecurity – ALL THE TIME. You can tell media that your farm is biosecure, and you can't let them on your farm – however, the same rules *must apply to others* who may ask to visit your farm (industry leaders, elected officials, family, etc.).
- Consider having a prepared media statement that shares your farm's position and can be quickly emailed to media in response to requests. (AEB/UEP can assist with developing these points.)
- Recognize that they are allowed to be on public property, such as roads or adjacent property (unless law enforcement or regulators say otherwise due to quarantine restrictions).
- Media also are legally allowed to film from public property or via drone. This is why managing onsite activities, such as mortality management, is critically important. *Be aware of the visual “picture” of your farm at all times.*
- Don't attempt to run them off, raise your voice or stick your hand in the camera – that will only lead to a negative portrayal of you and your farm.



HPAI Protocol Considerations

As part of your on-farm protocol in responding to a finding of HPAI, you may have to take specific actions that are difficult and may not be easily understood by those not in animal agriculture. This may include depopulation or removal of mortality, among other measures.

While it is unlikely, it is possible that activists, media or community members may be watching your farm for these kinds of activities or even taking video of what is happening on your farm. You and your operations team will be the best judge of how to manage this process, but these suggestions should be considered:

- If euthanasia carts or other machines are brought onto your farm, place carts where they are least visible from streets or other public access areas.
- If removing birds from a barn, also do that in a way that is least visible to others.
- Consider parking trucks, trailers or other vehicles to obscure the view of the euthanasia carts or bird removal.
- Remind all employees (whether farm or contract) of the sensitivity of this situation, and about the need to be mindful of how they do this job, to keep the process confidential and to be aware of their surroundings.
- Limit the number of people involved in euthanasia and mortality management to essential, full-time (non-contract) workers only, and over-supervise with farm managers during the process.
- If using third-party vendors for euthanasia or bird removal, only use a trusted contractor who has employees familiar with these procedures. Emphasize to them your expectations to maintain your high standards and cautionary measures at all times.
- Require all farm and contract employees handling sick birds or mortality to do so with respect and dignity for the hens. Animal care should continue throughout the process.
- If you are storing your mortality on your farm, either temporarily or permanently (e.g., composting or burial), do so in a secure location, ideally away from public areas or streets.
- Consider asking local law enforcement or private security to monitor or staff your farm location during this process and to watch for unauthorized persons on your property.

Above all – continue to do the right thing at all times, being mindful that your farm, and the egg industry overall, is in a high state of awareness with our stakeholders right now. The measure of our reputation is how we handle ourselves when times are tough. As always, the AEB/UEP crisis team is available to support you.