

5 Steps to Prevent Avian Flu in Chickens



How to prevent avian flu in chickens and other domesticated birds is a critical issue as avian flu continues to spread across the United States.

The country approaches a record number of birds affected compared to previous outbreaks: **more than 50 million birds across 46 states** have either died due to the infection or have been put down after exposure since the beginning of 2022.

This number matches the one from the 2015 avian flu outbreak, which used to be considered the most extensive bird flu outbreak in the country's history. The only difference is that twice the number of states are being affected this time, as [reported by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service](#).



HPAI 2022 Confirmed Detections

as of December 1, 2022

Last reported detection Wednesday, November 30, 2022

Data updated weekdays by 12pm Eastern

656 Confirmed Flocks

Birds tested and confirmed having HPAI

46 Affected States

States with at least one confirmed infected flock

Commercial Flocks

282

Backyard Flocks

374

Birds Affected*

52.70M

To contain the spread of bird flu viruses to other animals, including pets, authorities are prompting poultry farms to take adequate preventive measures. This article illustrates five measures poultry farms should take to prevent avian flu in chickens and other poultry.

Managing wild bird presence to prevent bird flu spreading

First, we must address how **wild bird migration has played a crucial role in this year's outbreak**. Scientists have detected the same H5N1 virus strain infecting chickens in more than 3,000 wild birds. However, most bird flu detections occurred in ducks, geese, and other waterfowl. These birds do not get sick when infected with it as they are the virus' natural host and reservoir, playing a crucial role in the survival and reproduction of the virus itself.

Since the spreading of bird flu is directly related to wild birds' presence, the U.S. Department of Agriculture defined a series of recommendations to help poultry operations manage wildlife around the farm.



5 steps to prevent avian flu in chickens

1) Remove standing water

- Avoid pooling water by filling or grading areas where water stands for more than 48 hours after rainfall. The standing water potentially attracts ill waterfowl.
- Keep your equipment far from standing water as it could contain wildlife faeces or other contaminants.
- Carry water away from poultry houses with French drains and culverts.
- Do not use untreated surface water for watering poultry or cleaning poultry barns and other facilities.

2) Manage Ponds and Basins

- Remove or prune plants from artificial water structures.
- Use effective bird control solutions to keep waterfowl away from ponds or basins.
- Separate natural ponds from the area around barns with a fence.

3) Reduce Food Sources

- First and foremost: do not feed wildlife!
- Place all feed structures on a clean pad.
- Check pipes and connections regularly to spot leaks.

- Keep a broom and lidded garbage container at every feed storage area for quick cleanups.
- Clean natural food sources by removing fallen fruits and often mowing grass.
- Don't pile used litter near barns.

4) Cover Waste

- Always cover carcasses and compost piles.
- Keep the latch dumpster and trash can lids closed.

5) Secure Buildings

- Fix holes in barn walls to prevent wild birds from getting in.
- Check and repair damaged windows and doors.
- Regularly inspect foam insulation for signs of bird digging, chewing, or pecking.
- Remove old nests before each nesting season, following local regulations.



Deters wild waterfowl using lasers

In addition to all the steps mentioned above, poultry farms must install effective bird deterrent systems to keep wild waterfowl and other birds away.

The Dutch **University of Wageningen recently investigated innovative laser bird control solutions** to be used around poultry farms. The research explored that Bird Control Group's automated laser bird deterrent, AVIX Autonomic could be a successful biosafety measure to prevent avian influenza viruses from spreading from wild birds to domestic animals.

The results were positive: no wild ducks visited the free-range poultry area (99.7% prevention rate) when the laser was used. There was also a reduction of visits from other wild birds in the free-range area during sunrise and 10 am (> 96% prevention).

The study's project leader and epidemiologist at WBVR, Armin Elbers, interpreted, "The all bird species efficacy of the laser for reducing the rate of wild birds visiting the free-range study area was 98.2 %."

The AVIX Autonomic laser bird deterrent continuously moves a laser beam that leverages a bird's innate fight-or-flight response to scare away pests and migratory birds. As a result, the area looks uninhabitable, pushing the birds elsewhere – reducing contamination and risk of avian flu transmission across poultry farms.

Bird flu symptoms in chickens

Even with all the correct measures, chickens could still be infected by the virus and get sick. So it is also vital to identify bird flu symptoms in time.

Chickens infected with bird flu may show the following symptoms:

- lack of vitality, movement, or appetite;
- drop in egg production of more than 5%;
- swelling around the head, neck, and eyes;
- coughing, panting, or sneezing;
- restlessness, tremors, or lack of coordination;
- diarrhoea;
- sudden death.

Contact your local animal health office immediately if you suspect your chickens may have avian influenza.

Bird Control Group's automated laser bird repellent provides 24/7 protection from wild birds by shining a green laser light in the area affected by the problem. Get in touch via the [website](#) if you are interested in learning more.