

HPAI Guidance for Veterinary Clinics

Updated April 2022

What are the signs of HPAI?

- Decreased water consumption
- Extreme depression
- Very quiet
- Difficulty breathing
- Decrease in feed or water intake
- Swelling or purple discoloration of head, eyelids, comb, wattle, and hocks
- Decrease in egg production
- Sudden unexplained death

What if a client calls with sick birds?

Are all birds sick or just one? What is the overall health of the flock?

- If one bird is sick or dead and all the others appear healthy, it may not be HPAI. However, if a flock is experiencing daily mortality or there are a number of dead birds, it should be reported to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at 402-471-2351, or through USDA at 866-536-7593.

How should clinics handle routine avian appointments?

Consider curbside protocols like those used during COVID-19. Rather than allowing clients into your facility, have clients remain in their cars while birds are taken into and out of your facility by staff, or conduct the medical appointment in the client's vehicle if able.

Conduct discussions about care via phone.

Avian patient physical contact should be limited to only what is necessary, and staff should always wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and wash their hands before and after handling birds.

What if clients have birds in one of the state's control areas?

Encourage your clients to contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at 402-471-2351 to find out if they reside inside one of the state's control areas. They will receive further guidance on what to do if they have sick birds or if they need to move their birds. Veterinarians can also call 402-471-2351 for support with questions on biosecurity, control areas or any other questions related to the state's HPAI response.

Considerations for clinic staff biosecurity

- Does the facility have a written biosecurity plan and procedures?
- Do employees and volunteers receive biosecurity training?
- Do employees and volunteers change into dedicated work clothing/outerwear onsite? Is work-provided clothing laundered onsite, or is it taken home with employees?
- What personal protective equipment (such as boots, gloves, coveralls, and masks) do you provide?
- Are staff allowed to keep poultry or pet birds at home? Do staff engage in sport hunting of wild birds?
- If the attending veterinarian is an offsite contractor, do they treat birds at other locations? What precautions do they take when visiting your facility?
- Are there protocols (such as showering, changing clothes, or avoiding bird contact for 72 hours) for people who visit captive wild bird facilities or poultry premises?

Guidance for clinic staff biosecurity

- Make an exam room at the clinic for avian appointments only.
- See avian appointments at the end of the day or after hours.
- Limit staff contact with avian species, especially those who have pet birds at home.
- Perform only emergency surgeries for avian species. Routine surgeries should wait until necessary.
- Separate hospitalized avian species from routine avian appointments.
- Properly dispose of or disinfect all medical equipment and laundry used for avian appointments.
- Make sure the disinfectant used at the clinic kills the HPAI virus.
- Don't use cell phones and other personal property during avian appointments.
- Use proper PPE including gowns, foot coverings, masks, gloves, and eye protection.
- Teach staff and clients about how HPAI is spread and how to reduce the spread of the disease.