
STATE OF MONTANA

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MEMORANDUM

FROM: Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, Administrator and State Veterinarian

SUBJECT: Avian Influenza Update and Biosecurity Advisory Update

EFFECTIVE DATE: February 01, 2026

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) continues to be detected in areas of our shared flyways. With the start of spring migration the Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL) considers HPAI a threat.

This memo therefore serves as recommendation from the state veterinarians' office that birds be housed indoors to the extent possible to reduce the risk of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) from wild birds from now until June 30, 2026, to accommodate the spring migratory bird season. HPAI is concerning for several reasons:

- Outbreaks are often associated with mortality rates that approach 100% in domestic poultry.
- The potential for human and domestic animal infection remains a concern. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has assigned a low risk for the general population but a moderate to high rating for individuals who contact infected animals or environments.
- Significant economic and trade impacts, including import restrictions, result when HPAI is present in an area.

To protect flocks, MDOL recommends that producers separate domestic poultry from wild birds. As much as possible, house poultry inside and discourage any interaction with wild birds, particularly migrating waterfowl.

Direct contact with infected birds, contaminated objects/equipment, and aerosol (short distances) can spread the virus which is found in feces, saliva, and respiratory secretions. Therefore, an essential element of any biosecurity program is avoiding contact between domestic poultry and other birds. The risk to each farm may be different, so it is important to consider your situation when complying with this request. If you are certified organic and want to make changes to housing, you must contact your certifier before altering confinement and meet their requirements to remain certified.

This heightened biosecurity effort will be important through the fall migratory bird season. Thank you for your cooperation. For additional information please visit the MDOL website here: <https://liv.mt.gov/Animal-Health/Avian-Influenza-2022>.