



Avian influenza

Know the signs

Avian influenza (bird flu) is an infectious disease that affects birds, caused by the influenza A virus. High pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) is very infectious and can rapidly cause significant death in flocks. Species of bird are affected differently by the virus with some showing more clinical signs and death, while others spread the disease without showing clinical signs.

The main causes of bird flu in poultry and other captive birds are direct contact with the virus via:

- wild birds, in particular waterfowl and seabirds such as geese, ducks, swans and gulls
- faeces and other excretions from infected birds
- contaminated footwear, clothing, vehicles and equipment (including straw bedding)

Bird flu is a notifiable disease in poultry and other captive birds. If you do not report it, you're breaking the law.

Clinical signs to look out for

Birds infected with the most aggressive strains of avian influenza, high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI), usually show some (or all) of the following signs:

- high death rate in the flock
- swollen head
- closed and runny eyes
- lethargy and depression
- lying down and unresponsiveness
- lack of coordination
- decrease in appetite
- sudden increase or decrease in water consumption
- head and body shaking
- drooping of the wings
- dragging of legs
- twisting of the head and neck
- swelling and blue discolouration of comb and wattles
- haemorrhages and redness on shanks of the legs and under the skin of the neck
- breathing difficulties such as gaping (mouth breathing), nasal snicking (coughing sound), sneezing, gurgling or rattling
- fever
- discoloured or loose watery droppings
- stop or significant drop in egg production



Haemorrhages on the legs



High death rate



Blue discoloration on comb and wattle (cyanosis), swelling and oedema



Twisting of the head and neck



Find out more information and how to report bird flu by visiting:

www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu