

## **Avian Influenza FAQ**

### **What is avian influenza?**

A disease caused by infection with avian influenza (“bird flu”) viruses. These viruses usually infect poultry but can infect people. Infected birds shed virus through their saliva, mucus, and feces. People can become infected when virus is in the air by breathing in droplets or possibly dust, or by touching surfaces contaminated with their mucus, saliva, or feces and then touching their mouth or nose. Human illness from bird flu has ranged from no symptoms at all to severe illness, including death.

### **What can I do to prevent infection?**

- CDC recommends everyone 6 months and older get a seasonal flu vaccine every year.
- Avoid sources of exposures.
- Practice proper hand hygiene after contact with poultry, contaminated surfaces and after removing gloves. Use soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Wash hands before all breaks (especially when smoking or snacking will occur), and prior to leaving the affected farm.
- If you must handle sick poultry, use personal protective equipment (gloves, medical face mask and eye protection), wash hands with soap and water after contact with birds and change your clothes.

### **How do I know if my bird is sick?**

Signs of disease include:

- Swollen eyelids/sinuses/combs or wattles
- Purple or bluish discoloration of wattles and combs
- Respiratory snicking, a hacking sound made as the birds try to clear their upper respiratory tract
- Generally depressed birds
- Unexplained mortality

### **What precautions can I take to keep my birds healthy?**

- Keep feeders and waterers clean and out of reach of wild birds. Clean up feed spills.
- Change feeding practices if wild birds continue to be present.
- Use dedicated or clean clothing and footwear when working with poultry

- Clean and disinfect equipment that comes in contact with your birds, such as shovels and rakes.
- Clean and disinfect poultry housing and equipment often to limit contact of birds with their waste.
- Evaluate your cleaning practices.

### **What do I do if I think my bird and/or someone on the farm is sick?**

- Report sick birds to the Maryland Department of Agriculture at **410-841-5810**. Report sick birds and people to the Howard County Health Department at **410-313-1412**.

### **What is the treatment for avian influenza?**

Antiviral drugs such as Tamiflu (oseltamivir) may be prescribed (treatment is most effective when taken soon after symptoms begin).

### **What can I do to proactively to prevent avian influenza?**

Educate yourself, monitor birds for signs/ symptoms, flu vaccination with the current seasonal flu vaccine, implement infection control measures.

### **How do I dispose of an infected bird and/or disinfect?**

Contact HCHD for current policy.