

March 18, 2022

Dear Resident,

The Howard County Health Department (HCHD) would like to make poultry owners aware of recent detection of avian influenza (“bird flu”) in domestic poultry, in several states, including Maryland (Eastern Shore), Delaware and Virginia.

Avian influenza is a virus that can cause severe illness and death disease in both wild and domestic birds (like chicken and duck). While avian influenza can be transmitted to humans, the illness is typically mild. Infected birds can shed avian influenza viruses in their saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. Susceptible birds become infected when they have contact with the virus as it is shed, or through contact with surfaces that are contaminated with the virus. Signs of disease in birds include swollen eyelids/sinuses/combs or wattles, 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, and unexplained deaths.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) is working closely with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and HCHD, to assist poultry owners with the surveillance (monitoring behavior), reporting and control of avian influenza. People with poultry are urged to remain vigilant and do everything possible to reduce the chances of an infectious disease being spread by people or animals. Along with our state partners, we are available to assist with preventing and controlling infection. Please report any unusual or sudden increases in sick birds to MDA (410-841-5810) and HCHD (410-313-1412). For additional information on avian influenza, please visit the websites listed below:

[HCHD Avian Influenza Information](#)

[USDA Prevention of Avian Influenza in Birds](#)

[MDA Avian Flu](#)

[Avian Influenza in Birds | Avian Influenza \(Flu\) \(cdc.gov\)](#)

[Maryland Sick Bird Reporting for Back Yard Flocks](#)

Sincerely,



Kelly Russo, MD, MPH  
Medical Director