

Update to on-farm services providers on biosecurity

April 4, 2024

**Guidance subject to updates as we learn more about the transmission of the virus.*

The progression of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) requires heightened biosecurity measures at the farm. As HPAI continues to evolve south of the border, we need to prepare for the possibility of a spread in Canada, and implement measures to mitigate the risk of spreading it on farms / across farms.

Background

- Incidents of HPAI have been reported in dairy cattle in the southern United States.
- New cases have been confirmed in Idaho and Michigan, which may have been caused by cattle movement.
- These are the first known instances of HPAI found in dairy cattle. (Other animals and mammals have also tested positive for AI in recent years, including cats and dogs.)
- HPAI has not been found in dairy cattle in Canada to date.
- It is highly likely that it is carried by migratory birds. Wild waterfowl, such as ducks and geese can carry and shed the virus without showing any clinical signs of disease.
- This avian virus is easily transmitted between birds. However, it seems that bovine-to-bovine transmission cannot be ruled out, so the recommended biosecurity measures below cover this possibility.
- The risk of transmission of this virus to humans is low in terms of public health. However, on April 1, the Center for Disease Control confirmed H5N1 in a farm worker in Texas. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is therefore recommended to protect the health of humans dealing with sick animals.

Information from the CFIA

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has developed a new page to keep farmers and veterinarians informed of how this disease evolves and biosecurity measures that may help mitigate risks.

<https://inspection.canada.ca/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/avian-influenza/latest-bird-flu-situation/hpai-in-livestock/eng/1711895796746/1711895797730>

Milk Safety and Quality:

- Only milk from healthy animals is authorized for distribution and for human consumption.
- Pasteurization, which is mandatory in Canada has continually proven to inactivate bacteria and viruses in milk.
- Pasteurization kills harmful bacteria and viruses while retaining the milk's nutritional properties and ensures that the milk we drink is safe.

Information for Canadian dairy farmers:

These new developments mean there is now a need to heighten biosecurity measures on Canadian dairy farms.

Below, DFC is sharing advice learned from US experience, and we are also working with CFIA and other experts on specific Canadian recommendations for heightened vigilance and biosecurity on Canadian farms.

Here are some recommendations to reduce risks related to possible transmission routes:

To limit transmission from cow to cow:

1. Closely follow heightened biosecurity practices including increased herd monitoring for signs of illness.
2. Limit animal movements from U.S. or Canadian sources.
3. Restrict animal movement to those necessary.
4. After moving cattle, disinfect livestock trailer.
5. Isolate sick cattle from the herd promptly.
6. Isolate and monitor for symptoms for 21 days any Canadian animals that are brought from another farm, or from a place where they could have been in contact with other animals, especially if there is a risk they were in contact with animals from hot spots.
7. Milk sick cows separately (last) and discard the milk. Sanitize the milking equipment before using on healthy cows.
8. Heat treat milk that is given to calves or any animals on farm.

To limit transmission from person/equipment to cows:

- Ensure everyone going on your farm wears biosecurity gear and disinfects boots and equipment— any service provider, vet, hoof trimmer, repair technician, field staff, etc.
- Ensure only clean clothes are worn around healthy bovines.
- Restrict human movement on your farm from anyone who has been on U.S. farms. If absolutely necessary, use extra caution before these people come on your farm.

To limit transmission from cow to people on the farm:

- To reduce risks, wear gloves and mask when handling a sick animal. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth until washing hands.
- Remove clothing worn around sick animals to be washed and shower at the end of the day.
- Wear different clothes and footwear if you must go to another barn or another farm.
- Train staff and family on measures to take.

To limit transmission from air, water and feed sources:

- Restrict unnecessary vehicles that move between farms.
- Reduce standing water as much as possible.
- Wear different boots in barn than outside.
- Isolate sick cows so they do not have access to same feed, water and air as healthy cattle.
- Delineate farmyard biosecurity zones so service provider vehicles, shared equipment or custom work do not come in contact with:
 - animals (in barn or on pasture);
 - areas in contact with tractors or tools meant for use in the barn; and
 - common areas that farm personnel commonly use.

To reduce risk from migratory birds:

- Make the farmyard as unwelcoming to birds as you can by removing bird boxes on nesting grounds or wetlands nearby to limit bovine exposure to birds.
- Quickly clean up feed that may have spilled on the ground.
- Reduce bird access to feed supply (keep in enclosed areas, under roof or covered).
- Avoid bringing a tractor that is typically accessible to birds inside the barn.

Signs to watch for on the farm:

If you find a dead bird/wildlife on your property, do not handle it. Contact your local office of the [CWHC-RCSF: Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative](#).

If you detect the following symptoms or clinical signs in your herd, contact your herd vet immediately. They will then reach out to CFIA if necessary.

- Decreased herd level milk production;
- Acute sudden drop in production with some severely impacted cows experiencing thicker, concentrated, colostrum like milk;
- Decrease in feed consumption with a simultaneous drop in rumen motility; and
- Abnormal tacky or loose feces, and some fever.

Producers with impacted herds in the United States have reported older cows in mid-lactation may be more likely to be severely impacted than younger cows and fresh cows or heifers.

Previous learnings in experience with AI in Canada

H5N1 is primarily spread by birds to animals and will spread on farms by people carrying matter from infected birds—such as dust, dander, and bird droppings—on their clothing, gloves, soles of their shoes, vehicle tires, animal trailers and other equipment, in addition to contaminated water.

The avian influenza virus is easily killed by many disinfectants. Keeping equipment, clothing and footwear clean helps protect cattle health from many viruses and bacteria.

Useful links

Information on H5N1 in dairy: <https://inspection.canada.ca/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/avian-influenza/latest-bird-flu-situation/hpai-in-livestock/eng/1711895796746/1711895797730>

Information on Avian Influenza: <https://inspection.canada.ca/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/avian-influenza/facts-about-avian-influenza/eng/1356193731667/135619391845>

Detailed biosecurity measures and advice developed in the United States in dealing with outbreaks: <https://www.nmpf.org/resources/biosecurity/>

USDA updates on the detections of H5N1: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-2022/hpai-detections-in-livestock>