

HPAI Guidance for Veterinary Clinics

Avian clients should not be turned away simply because HPAI is in the environment. Clinics and mobile veterinarians are encouraged to continue treating birds with a little extra attention focused on biosecurity and the signs of HPAI should they need to report suspected cases to animal health officials.

What are the signs of HPAI?

- Decreased water consumption
- Extreme depression
- Very quiet
- Difficulty breathing
- Decrease in feed or water intake
- Swelling or purple discoloration of head, eyelids, comb, wattle, and hocks
- Decrease in egg production
- Sudden unexplained death

What if a client calls with sick birds?

Veterinarians should develop a set of questions for their clients to determine the HPAI risk of the pet bird and then develop their own procedures appropriate to the risk. Some starter questions to consider:

- Is the avian species a wild bird?
 - Veterinarians should not let wild waterfowl, gulls or other susceptible HPAI wild species into their facility.
- Does the client live inside or near one of the state's control areas? (See page 2 on how to determine if the client is in a control area.)
 - If yes, please contact the Board of Animal Health.
- Are all birds sick or just one? What is the overall health of the flock?
 - If one bird is sick or dead and all the others appear healthy it may not be HPAI. However, if a flock is experiencing daily mortality or there are a number of dead birds it should be reported to the Minnesota Avian Influenza Hotline right away at 1-833-454-0156.
- Does the bird have access to the outside in a free ranging type of situation (vs. being in a contained/controlled housing away from environmental elements)
 - If yes, how long does the bird spend time outside? Is the time spent outside supervised?
- Does the client live by a body of water or agricultural field?
- Does the client feed wild birds or wild animals?
- Does the client engage in sport hunting of wild birds?
- Does the client work or volunteer with any avian species?

Answering yes to any of these questions should prompt additional precautionary procedures to be utilized and have AI on your list of differential diagnoses.

How should clinics handle routine avian appointments?

Avian patient physical contact should be limited, and staff should always wear the appropriate PPE and wash their hands before and after handling birds. Additional biosecurity guidance includes:

- Make an exam room at the clinic for avian appointments only.
- See avian appointments at the end of the day.
- Limit staff contact with avian species, especially those that have pet birds at home.
- Emergency surgeries only for avian species.
- Hospitalized avian species should be kept away from routine avian appointments.
- All medical equipment and laundry used for avian appointments should be washed and disinfected appropriately.
- Disinfect exam rooms following label directions on preparation and contact time to ensure it kills potential HPAI virus. Look for a disinfectant with an EPA registered product with label claim for Avian Influenza
- Proper PPE should be used including gowns, foot coverings, masks, gloves, and eye protection.
- Educate staff and clients about how HPAI is spread and how to reduce the spread of the disease.

How should mobile veterinarians handle client visits?

- Wear clean clothing and boots.
- If possible, limit ambulatory visits to facilities with poultry to one site per day.
- Wash your vehicle immediately prior to and when leaving a site with poultry.
- Use disposable coveralls, boots, and gloves, +/- masks. If possible and agreeable to the client, leave them at the client's site.

What if clients have birds in one of the state's control areas?

Encourage your client to contact the Minnesota Board of Animal Health's hotline **1-833-454-0156** to find out if they reside inside one of the state's control areas. They will receive further guidance on what to do if they have sick birds or if they need to move their birds. Veterinarians can also call the hotline for support with questions on biosecurity, control areas or any other questions related to the state's HPAI response.

Considerations for clinic staff biosecurity

- Does the facility have a written biosecurity plan and procedures?
- Do employees and volunteers receive biosecurity training?
- Do employees and volunteers change into dedicated work clothing onsite? Is work-provided clothing laundered onsite, or is it taken home with employees?
- What personal protective equipment (such as boots, gloves, coveralls, and masks) do you provide?
- Are staff allowed to keep poultry or pet birds at home? Do staff engage in sport hunting of wild birds?
- If the attending veterinarian is an offsite contractor, do they treat birds at other locations? What precautions do they take when visiting your facility?
- Are there protocols (such as showering, changing clothes, or avoiding bird contact for 72 hours) for people who visit captive wild bird facilities or poultry premises?

What if you suspect a bird in your care has HPAI?

- Call the Minnesota Avian Influenza Hotline right away at 1-833-454-0156.

Materials to share with your clients

- [HPAI Informational Flyer for Small Flock Owners](https://www.bah.state.mn.us/media/HPAI-Notice-Backyard-Final.pdf)
(<https://www.bah.state.mn.us/media/HPAI-Notice-Backyard-Final.pdf>)
- [General Biosecurity Steps for Livestock and Poultry Producers](https://www.bah.state.mn.us/media/general-biosecurity-steps.pdf)
(<https://www.bah.state.mn.us/media/general-biosecurity-steps.pdf>)

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