



For Immediate Release  
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## Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Detected in Brazoria County Birds

AUSTIN, TX – The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) and the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed the presence of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in a non-commercial mixed backyard flock (non-poultry) in Brazoria County, Texas. This is the first confirmed case of HPAI in Texas this year.

Following a number of rapid bird deaths in the flock, samples were tested at the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory and confirmed at the APHIS National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa on January 9, 2024.

The TAHC is working closely with federal animal health officials on a joint incident response. State officials quarantined the affected premises, and as part of existing avian influenza response plans, federal and state partners are working jointly to conduct surveillance in areas around the affected flock.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the public health risk associated with these avian influenza detections remains low. As a reminder, the proper handling and cooking of all poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165° F is recommended as a general food safety precaution.

"We encourage all poultry producers to stay vigilant in practicing enhanced biosecurity and keeping their flocks separate from migratory birds," said Dr. Bud Dinges, TAHC executive director and state veterinarian. "Eliminating opportunities for wild waterfowl to interact with domestic flocks, watching for signs of the disease, and reporting sick birds immediately are all important in preventing the spread of H5N1."

The TAHC recommends the following animal health considerations for all Texas poultry producers:

- Closely observe and report sudden increases in the number of sick birds or bird deaths to the TAHC at 1-800-550-8242 or APHIS 1-866-536-7593.
- Practice good [biosecurity](#) with poultry and all other animals interacting with the flock.
- Prevent contact between domestic birds and wild birds.
- Consider bringing birds indoors to further prevent exposures.
- Avoid visits to other premises with susceptible animals and wash hands before and after handling birds.
- Find additional information on biosecurity for backyard flocks at [https://www.tahc.texas.gov/news/brochures/TAHCBrochure\\_AI-BiosecurityPoultry.pdf](https://www.tahc.texas.gov/news/brochures/TAHCBrochure_AI-BiosecurityPoultry.pdf).

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- TAHC HPAI page: <https://www.tahc.texas.gov/emergency/avianinfluenza.html>
- United States Detections of HPAI: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai>
- USDA Defend the Flock biosecurity on a budget webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXfCXv6OSVY>
- USDA Defend the Flock biosecurity: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/defend-the-flock-program/df-resources/df-resources>



## **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND**

Avian influenza (AI) is caused by an influenza type A virus and is carried by free flying waterfowl such as ducks, geese and shorebirds. AI viruses are classified by a combination of two groups of proteins: hemagglutinin or “H” proteins, of which there are 16 (H1–H16), and neuraminidase or “N” proteins, of which there are 9 (N1–N9). Many different combinations of “H” and “N” proteins are possible. Each combination is considered a different subtype and can be further broken down into different strains which circulate within flyways/geographic regions. AI viruses are further classified by their pathogenicity (low or high)—the ability of a particular virus strain to produce disease.

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*The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) was established in 1893 as the Livestock Sanitary Commission and charged with protecting the state’s domestic animals “from all contagious or infectious diseases of a malignant character.” TAHC remains true to this charge while evolving with the times to protect the health and marketability of all Texas livestock and poultry. Learn more about the TAHC by visiting [www.tahc.texas.gov](http://www.tahc.texas.gov).*