USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Defend the Flock YOUR BIOSECURITY BULLETIN

Spring 2026

In case you missed it...

On January 30, we hosted our "Double Down on Biosecurity" webinar—where USDA biosecurity experts discussed the realities of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), biosecurity best practices, and how free USDA assessments identify and help lower the risk for infection.



Here are the biggest takeaways—and what they mean for poultry farmers and operations.

1 Wildlife drives risk.

Data shows that approximately 75% of HPAI detections are consistent with wildlife introductions, with the remaining 25% linked to farm-to-farm transmission. Waterfowl are among the most common carriers—environmental factors like standing water and spilled grain can attract peri-domestic species such as sparrows, creating additional exposure points. David Marks, Assistant State Director of Wildlife Services, explained, "**[HPAI] is circulating in North American wildlife. So that means as an industry, we do need to change how we operate because things are different now.**"

2 HPAI is an ongoing reality.

HPAI is highly contagious and can wipe out entire flocks in days. It continues to be a major threat to poultry producers, animal health systems, international trade, and economic stability. Dr. Nancy Hannaway, Poultry Staff VMO and Biosecurity Reimbursement Lead, noted, "**This is considered to be one of the largest and most widespread outbreaks in global history, affecting millions of birds.**"

continued





Report Sick Birds

If you see signs of illness, take action right away!

Veterinarian	
Cooperative Extension Office	
State Veterinarian/Animal or Poultry Diagnostic Lab	304-348-2214
USDA	**866.536.7593**

DEFEND THE FLOCK

continued

3 Biosecurity is our best defense against HPAI.

Dr. Hannaway affirmed, "**Biosecurity is the key to mitigate the risk of disease spread... We can slow down or stop the spread, but it takes all of us to do it.**" Practical, high-impact measures include:

Clean Up
Disinfect all equipment, tools, and clothing before and after use. Keep feed, water, and bedding clean. Wash hands often.

Step Up
Wear dedicated farm boots or shoe covers to prevent contamination. Use a footbath to disinfect footwear at entry and exit points.

Divide Up
Keep poultry separated from other animals. Use covered enclosures or netting to reduce contact with wild birds. Limit visitors whenever possible.

Brush Up
Monitor flock health every day. Keep records current. Make sure everyone who enters poultry areas knows the signs of HPAI and follows biosecurity steps.

4 USDA is a partner in prevention.

Beyond biosecurity guidance, USDA offers direct support to poultry growers with 500 or more birds through biosecurity assessments and the **Poultry Biosecurity Incentive Program**. These operations may qualify for cost-share support to help address the highest-risk biosecurity concern identified.

Jacob Smithson, Management and Program Analyst for Veterinary Services explained, "**the program is a cost-share between the producer and the USDA, which is up to 75% USDA and at least 25% the producer.**"

These assessments help identify biosecurity gaps and prioritize improvements that can reduce risk by:

- Identifying wildlife species present and potential biosecurity risks
- Mapping and documenting structural vulnerabilities
- Ranking hazards by risk tier
- Recommending mitigation strategies
- Providing ongoing monitoring and reporting



Two Assessment Pathways

USDA offers two free, voluntary assessments for poultry operations with 500 or more birds.

WBA (Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment): On-farm check to spot wildlife-related risks and steps to help keep wildlife out through a series of regular engagements between APHIS Wildlife Services staff and facility owners or managers.

BIFA (Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessment): Review of on-farm biosecurity plan to help prevent disease from entering your operation in collaboration with APHIS Veterinary Services.

Visit the **Defend the Flock Resource Center** to get:

- **Free resources** on biosecurity best practices
- Information on **free biosecurity assessments**
- **Access to** the recording, transcript, and Q&A from the webinar.

For more information about how to keep your flock healthy, follow ***Defend the Flock*** on **Facebook** and **Twitter** and visit **www.aphis.usda.gov/animalhealth/defendtheflock.**

DEFEND THE FLOCK