

HPAI Guidelines Fall/Winter 2022

As of September 2022, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has been detected in at least 46 states in North America, including Texas. Historically, HPAI outbreaks occur during fall/winter migration and wane afterwards. The EA H5 HPAI strain has persisted through the summer months and is expected to cause morbidity and mortality events throughout the fall and winter. This unusual behavior of the EA H5 HPAI strain may allow for HPAI to become endemic among wild bird populations in Texas and elsewhere.

To mitigate the effects of EA H5 HPAI without straining resources and staff, the TPWD Wildlife Health Program has created morbidity/mortality surveillance guidance for Fall/Winter 2022. These guidelines are meant to serve as a reference for when a morbidity and mortality event should be reported by landowners or biologists to TPWD. Based on these guidelines and the discretion of the Wildlife Health Program, animals meeting one or more of the criteria below may be tested for HPAI. This list was created in part by using recommendations from the United States Geological Service National Wildlife Health Center (USGS NWHC).

- Events involving wild bird species where the estimated number of dead or sick exceeds 500 birds.
- Morbidity or mortality events involving wild birds of any species within six miles of a facility housing domestic birds, regardless of facility HPAI status.
- Morbidity or mortality events involving gallinaceous birds such as wild turkeys and quail.
- Morbidity or mortality event involving five or more waterfowl or other water, shore or wading birds.
- Morbidity or mortality events involving any number of raptors or avian scavengers (ravens, crows, or gulls) near locations with on-going waterfowl mortality.
 - o Bald eagles and black vultures are considered highly susceptible to HPAI
- Morbidity or mortality events involving raptors, waterfowl or avian scavengers (ravens, crows or gulls) observed with neurological clinical signs such as, but not limited to, the following: lack of muscle coordination and balance that may include stumbling and falling, seizures, head tremors, walking or swimming in circles, abnormal position of the head or neck. Videos and photos are strongly encouraged.
- Morbidity or mortality events involving more than two threatened or endangered birds.
- Morbidity or mortality events involving mesopredator or omnivorous species with concurrent neurological signs.
- Morbidity or mortality events in backyard poultry or exotic waterfowl (so as to notify Texas Animal Health Commission).

This is not an all-inclusive list and any uncertainty or concern extending beyond these guidelines should be relayed to Dr. Reed and Dr. Wyckoff. Once HPAI is detected within a county, testing may not be needed for subsequent morbidity or mortality events within that county, but reporting of these events is still encouraged for continuous surveillance and monitoring.

Biosecurity

Although the current risk for human transmission is low, EA H5 HPAI is a zoonotic disease and precautions should be taken when handling sick or dead birds associated with a mortality event.

- Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including: aprons/coveralls, disposable gloves, rubber boots or shoe covers, safety glasses or goggles (can substitute prescription lenses), and a mask (surgical mask at minimum, fit-tested N95 respirator is ideal).
- Work upwind of animals to decrease risk of aerosol transmission of viral particles.
- Wash hands after handling any sick or dead birds, even when wearing gloves.
- Remove dirty clothing and place in a plastic bag for washing or disposal upon leaving work site. Do not wear dirty or contaminated clothes to any other place with wild or domestic birds.
- Clean equipment and vehicle appropriately. This includes tires, wheel wells, vehicle bodies and the undercarriage. Wash and remove all debris off the equipment and vehicle first before disinfecting per the recommendations below.
- Enhance your cleaning and disinfection protocols. Spraying surfaces can aerosolize infectious material, so wipe surfaces free of organic debris instead. Remember, adequate disinfectants like 10% bleach or 1% Virkon™ S require sufficient contact time (10 minutes) to kill virus. Let air dry or rinse with water prior to use. A variety of disinfectant wipes can also work more rapidly. Vehicles can be cleaned with a 10% bleach solution and a hand pump water sprayer.
- Contact Drs. Reed and/or Wyckoff if you have encountered an HPAI positive bird or mammal.