FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 17, 2025

**Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 Detected in New London County Backyard Flock**

***No human cases confirmed in Connecticut to date***

(HARTFORD, CT) – Connecticut Department of Agriculture (CT DoAg) advises that Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1, or bird flu, was confirmed in a backyard flock located in New London County on Wednesday, January 15, 2025. The backyard flock, consisting of chickens, ducks, and peacocks, were family pets, not commercial poultry, and had close contact with wild waterfowl in a nearby pond.

Samples were sent to the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (CVMDL) for testing. The results from CVMDL were then confirmed by the United States Department of Agriculture National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa. H5N1 is highly contagious among domestic poultry, and at this time there is no effective treatment or approved vaccine for the virus in poultry. The infected flock has been depopulated to prevent spread of the disease.

“Collaboration between state and federal partners is essential in preventing the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza in poultry and safeguarding the health of our farmworkers,” said **Agriculture Commissioner Bryan P. Hurlburt**. “Through a united approach we are able to swiftly identify and respond to protect our food supply and ensure the health of our communities.”

All poultry owners and producers are advised to enhance [biosecurity protocols](https://link.edgepilot.com/s/37d227d3/wa1O1yPngEqU6r83M6boNQ?u=https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock) to protect their backyard and commercial poultry flocks against H5N1.

“Biosecurity is the best defense for a flock owner to protect their birds from disease,” said **State Veterinarian Dr. Thamus Morgan, DVM, MPH, DACVPM**. “This should be top of mind for commercial and backyard hobby owners – we must all work together – to reduce the risk.”

**Biosecurity Tips**

Poultry biosecurity materials and checklists can be found on the USDA’s [Defend the Flock](https://link.edgepilot.com/s/37d227d3/wa1O1yPngEqU6r83M6boNQ?u=https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock) website. Best practices include:

* Keep wild birds and rodents out of poultry houses and coops.
* Don’t let poultry have contact with migratory waterfowl or other wild birds.
* Wash hands and boots before and after entering the poultry area.
* Buy birds from reputable sources to receive heathy birds.
* Restrict traffic onto and off your property.
* Have a written biosecurity plan in place.

Signs of H5N1 infection include sudden increase in bird deaths, sneezing, coughing, nasal discharge, watery or green diarrhea, lack of energy, poor appetite, drop in egg production, swelling around the eyes, neck, and head, and purple discoloration of wattles, combs, and legs.

Flock owners are encouraged to report anything unusual, especially sick or dead birds, to CT DoAg at 860-713-2505 or ctstate.vet@ct.gov or the USDA at 866-536-7593.

**Human Risk Remains Low**

No person to person spread of H5N1 has been detected to date, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to assess the risk to the general public as low. Residents are reminded that the proper handling and cooking of poultry and eggs to internal temperature of 165°F kills bacteria and viruses. No H5N1 virus detections have occurred to date in people, livestock, or other domestic animals in Connecticut. However, H5N1 continues to be detected sporadically in wild birds. Surveillance for cases in humans and animals is ongoing throughout the state.

“The current risk of infection from H5N1 to residents of Connecticut still remains low.  While we have no evidence of human-to-human transmission at this time, we need to remain vigilant,” said **Connecticut Department of Public Health Commissioner Manisha Juthani, MD**.  “The CDC is currently monitoring numerous H5N1 cases throughout the country and tracking the spread of the virus in states where it has been identified in people or animals.”

**H5N1 Resources**

[Reporting Dead Wild Birds](https://link.edgepilot.com/s/22d6cce0/F49vAG0vRkSNfjgVyyFHGA?u=https://portal.ct.gov/deep/wildlife/avian-influenza)[HPAI detections in commercial and backyard poultry](https://link.edgepilot.com/s/81e6c189/JQXj1X5-sEOoa987TPLTvQ?u=https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections)[Information on human H5N1 cases in the United States](https://link.edgepilot.com/s/ae540162/Nf0D9Kw5IUS__cWbVm6Ixg?u=https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/situation-summary/index.html)

[DPH H5N1 webpage.](https://link.edgepilot.com/s/81cea28a/vmWLRF0aaUOwQRNOD9vgxg?u=https://portal.ct.gov/dph/infectious-diseases/h5n1-virus)