



Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Guidance for Raptor Owners

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While most reports of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) are in chickens and turkeys, at least four privately-owned raptors in Utah have died from the disease. It is critical for raptor owners to know how to protect their birds from HPAI.

Clinical presentation

HPAI virus infection in raptors kept for falconry typically presents as a sudden onset of lethargy and anorexia (refusal to eat) which progresses quickly in severity with death often occurring within 1 to 5 days after exposure. Droppings may change in color from white to green. Birds may also develop respiratory distress and neurologic signs such as incoordination and seizures.

Prevention

Almost all HPAI deaths in falconry birds have occurred after consumption of an infected bird, most often a duck. Avoid feeding waterfowl and other birds potentially carrying HPAI.

Infection can also occur following direct and indirect contact with infected material (e.g. feathers, droppings, contaminated footwear), contaminated water, and airborne transmission.

Avoid/minimize exposure to sick birds and bird species known to carry HPAI asymptotically (i.e. waterfowl, gulls, shorebirds).

Avoid hunting ducks and pheasants that are in or near marshes where they share habitat with waterfowl.

Possible HPAI Exposure

If contact between a raptor and a potentially infected bird occurs, isolate the bird, use a separate glove, feed/handle the potentially exposed bird last after taking care of the other birds, and disinfect the perches, gloves, and any areas where the bird mutes.

If A Bird Dies Unexpectedly

If a bird dies, submit the bird for necropsy to the Utah Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in Logan or Spanish Fork, and contact the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food at the number below.

If HPAI is detected in the raptor that dies, the facility will be quarantined and other birds on the premises may be tested for HPAI. It is a common misconception that all birds on the premises will be euthanized. This is not correct. Each situation will be evaluated and appropriate measures taken to minimize impact.

Basic Biosecurity

- Avoid feeding wild birds, especially waterfowl. Freezing does not kill the virus.
- Avoid direct and indirect contact with wild birds, especially waterfowl, shorebirds, and gulls.
- Clean and disinfect footwear if you walked where waterfowl or gulls are present such as around ponds, marshes, etc.
- Avoid or minimize the presence of waterfowl, gulls, or shorebirds on the premises.
- Keep backyard chickens and ducks away from mews and weathering areas

