

Facts About Avian Influenza

- The U.S. has not had an outbreak of the Asian H5N1 strain of Avian Influenza (AI).
- Given that the Asian H5N1 strain may be carried by migratory waterfowl, we cannot eliminate the possibility that this virus may be brought to North America by wild birds. However, the U.S. poultry product system is robust in its ability to prevent disease in domestically-raised poultry and ultimately protect the American consumer.
- Modern U.S. poultry production methods actually prevent the entry of AI into flocks as the housing systems prevent exposure to wild birds.
- The U.S. poultry industry has multiple safeguards in place which are designed to prevent the disease and ensure early detection in the event of a possible introduction. This multi-layered system of protection includes biosecurity, testing, inspection and processing standards.
- Government and other scientists are routinely checking migratory birds in Alaska and elsewhere in the U.S. for signs of AI in the wild bird population.
- USDA has in place an extensive rapid response system. The government, in cooperation with the poultry industry, would eradicate the disease quickly by destroying infected flocks and disposing of them through environmentally safe and sound methods. The people involved in destroying flocks wear gloves, masks and protective clothing.
- Poultry farmers practice strict biosecurity, and it is heightened during an outbreak of AI. Trucks are hosed down, personnel wear protective clothing and plastic boots and go through foot baths, and farmers are supposed to stay away from community gatherings.
- There is no danger of acquiring avian influenza from normally and properly cooked food. AI is caused by a virus, and it is destroyed by the heat of normal cooking.
- So, even if the Asian H5N1 strain or another type of AI is ever detected, American consumers can rest assured their poultry is safe to eat.