Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Response

Policy for enhanced pre-slaughter surveillance of meat producing poultry flocks in affected States located outside of active Control Areas

Effective August 26, 2025

Please note: These procedures may be revised as the situation continues to change.

BACKGROUND

Current pre-slaughter surveillance for commercial poultry premises located within active Control Areas requires polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing within 48 hours prior to movement. Pre-slaughter surveillance testing for commercial poultry, located outside of an active Control Area, is primarily conducted via serology and can occur up to 21 days prior to movement to slaughter. This testing scheme could miss infected but not clinically apparent birds if testing is not conducted closer to movement to slaughter; it could also miss acute HPAI infection if testing is based on serologic results alone.

Given the current increased risk of HPAI introduction to poultry and to exercise caution to allow earlier detection of infected poultry premises located outside of active Control Areas, USDA APHIS is updating its recommendations for existing pre-slaughter surveillance schemes and clarifying its indemnity policies associated with this guidance.

PURPOSE

This document describes additional premovement actions and testing that USDA APHIS recommends for poultry flocks prior to moving to slaughter and clarifies its indemnity policies that pertain to flocks in which HPAI has been detected that have been moved or partially moved to slaughter. This guidance is in addition to the laboratory obligations to perform avian influenza testing as per Title 9, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 145.15 (9 CFR 145.15).

GENERAL GUIDANCE

Pre-Movement Isolation Recommendations

- For all commercial, meat-type poultry flocks, a pre-movement isolation period (PMIP) of no less than 72 hours prior to load-out should be implemented. During the 72-hr. PMIP:
  - No live or dead poultry will be moved onto or off the entire premises.
  - Only critical operational visits to the premises will continue.
  - Manure, litter, and garbage will not be removed from the premises; the producer is responsible for managing the risks associated with any on-site movement that must occur.
  - Enhanced biosecurity for people and vehicles; no off-site equipment will be pre-staged.

Recommendations for Pre-Movement Testing in Free Areas

- During a multi-day load out from a premises, samples from the remaining barns should be tested daily and resulted prior to moving those remaining barns to slaughter.

- Regardless of any pending movement to slaughter status for premises in these states, if the mortality rate in any barn exceeds the flock's typical mortality rates without a clear non-disease cause (e.g. feed or water delivery issues, power outages, etc.), the premises will collect samples from all barns on the premises for rt-PCR testing to be completed and resulted prior to commencing load-out.
- Not Detected (negative) results should be obtained prior to initiating load-out. If non-negative results are obtained on a flock, regulatory officials will initiate HPAI response activities as with other HPAI detections in poultry (e.g. quarantine, depopulation, etc.). If a flock has been partially loaded out and a non-negative result is obtained, APHIS does not recommend recalling product derived from birds that have already been shipped to slaughter. Flocks that are within active Control Areas will continue to follow the procedures as laid out in the Surveillance Sampling of Commercial Premises document.

Recommended Specimen Collection, Sampling Scheme, and Submission Procedures for Laboratory-Based PCR Testing

Select animals to collect specimen using the procedures below and refer to the current version of 'Avian Sample Collection for Avian Influenza and Newcastle Disease' (NVSL-WI-0023).

- Target daily dead birds followed by euthanized sick birds from each epidemiologic unit or house on the premises to collect specimens. Collect up to three 5-swab suspensions in 3 ml of acceptable virus transport media (VTM), or up to two 11-swab suspensions in 5.5 ml VTM. A minimum of two pooled specimen tubes with up to 11-bird specimens per tube should be collected.

- If there are not enough daily dead or euthanized sick birds to fill the minimum number of pools, evenly distribute the sick and dead bird specimens between the number of pools. Obtaining specimens from apparently healthy birds is generally not recommended and of negligible benefit.

- When selecting birds for specimen collection, the surveillance objective is to achieve a 95% confidence of detection at a 40% prevalence among birds in an epidemiological unit, house, or other group of birds with the same exposure risks, assuming a diagnostic protocol sensitivity of 85%.

Table 1. Sampling and pooling protocol summary for each barn on a premises; all barns on the premises are to be sampled.

Number of dead and euthanized sick birds found on the day of testing per barn	**Primary pooling protocol**	**Additional instruction and examples**
1-2	Sample dead birds or sick birds individually (3ml BHI)	

3-22	Three 5-swab pools in 3ml BHI OR Two 11-swab pools in 5.5ml BHI	Divide number of dead or sick bird swabs evenly between the tubes Example 1: there are 14 daily dead/euthanized birds in a barn • If using 3ml BHI tubes: place 5 swabs in two tubes and 4 swabs in one tube. • If using 5.5ml BHI tubes: place 7 swabs in each tube Example 2: there are 10 daily dead/euthanized birds in a barn • If using 3ml BHI tubes: place 3 swabs in two tubes and 4 swabs in one tube • If using 5.5ml BHI tubes: place 5 swabs in each tube
23 or more	Two 11-swab pools in 5.5ml BHI	See cell above

Indemnity Policy

USDA APHIS' indemnification policy allows reimbursement for live birds that must be depopulated due to a disease detection, based on the inventory of the flock on the date of detection. It does not reimburse for birds that die prior to detection or for products (except eggs) of HPAI-infected animals sent to slaughter. APHIS will not reimburse producers for products derived from the slaughter of poultry from an HPAI-affected flock. APHIS recommends producers conduct pre-slaughter testing as close as possible to shipment (as outlined above) to alleviate potential positive detections at the time of slaughter. If birds become clinically ill after pre-slaughter tests have been obtained, they should not be shipped to slaughter. If birds that are found to have developed clinical signs compatible with HPAI are shipped to slaughter, APHIS will not provide indemnity for those birds or compensate for potentially infected product.