



# New England States Animal Agricultural Security Alliance

An interactive regional collaboration of the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont

Supporting and developing regional standards, processes, and capacity through planning

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DACVPM  
State Veterinarian  
Connecticut Department of  
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Date: February 12, 2025

To: All Licensed New England Veterinarians

RE: Avian Influenza

Rachel Fiske, DVM  
Assistant State Veterinarian  
Division of Animal & Plant  
Health  
Maine Department of  
Agriculture, Conservation &  
Forestry  
22 State House Station  
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Dear Colleagues:

We, the six New England State Veterinarians are writing to you all under the umbrella of the New England States Animal Agriculture Security Alliance (NESAASA). NESAASA is a compact that the New England states entered for the purpose of supporting each other in the event of a significant animal health emergency. The current outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (a.k.a. HPAI or H5N1) certainly is a significant animal health emergency and the states would like to support each other in the form of providing consistent guidance to private sector veterinarians who may be in a position to encounter HPAI in poultry patients, or other species, in the course of their practice.

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Massachusetts Department of  
Agricultural Resources - Division  
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It should be noted that HPAI is classified by USDA as a Foreign Animal Disease. This classification is important because detection in the country triggers certain response and reporting obligations. Response obligations include, but are not limited to, rapid depopulation of all susceptible species on an infected premises, working with producers to pay them indemnity for losses and compensation for cleaning and disinfection of their premises, performing a thorough epidemiological study of the infected premises to determine the likely source of infection as well as all at risk contact premises, establishment of control areas around an infected premises, enhanced disease surveillance within a control area once established, placing movement restrictions on poultry and poultry products going into and out of a control area, and ensuring proper disposal of infected animals on a premises. Federal animal health officials are obligated to report all these activities to trade partners and those partners may place trade restrictions on commodities if they feel it is in their country's best interest to do so. There is considerable expense and gravity with a diagnosis of HPAI.

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Division of Agriculture/Animal  
Health  
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Providence, RI 02908

We have received inquiries from private sector veterinarians regarding guidance on potential cases they may see. We very much appreciate that our colleagues want to help in this national animal health event. After much debate and deliberation among the state and federal animal health officials in the region we collectively determined that it is inappropriate for private sector veterinarians to collect poultry samples for HPAI. We collectively feel that due to this virus being a Foreign Animal Disease, only state and federal officials should perform this testing because the consequences of a positive, or false negative, test are so high. Having all samples collected by state or federal animal health staff is the best way to ensure proper sampling technique, proper sample handling, and submission to an officially

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credentialed laboratory for testing by the proper methodology. We feel any other mechanism will erode the confidence that our trade partners have in our system.

With this, we respectfully ask that private sector veterinarians do not obtain samples from poultry that they suspect may be infected with HPAI, but rather promptly report their suspicion of HPAI to the State Veterinarian in the state where the flock is kept. We ask that you please collect the following information on the flock to assist us: the flock owner's complete name, the physical address where the flock is kept (not P.O. Box), telephone number for the flock owner, email address for the flock owner, total number of birds in the flock and types of birds, total number of birds that are currently sick in the flock, total number of birds that have recently died (previous 14 days) in the flock, date of onset of clinical illness, date of onset of mortality, and clinical signs observed. If you euthanized the bird, please ask the State Veterinarian for instructions on disposal (or submission for necropsy).

While HPAI continues to be considered low risk for zoonosis according to CDC, people who have contact with birds suspected of being infected should utilize PPE. CDC recommends wearing eye protection such as a face shield or goggles, barrier gloves such as latex or nitrile, a N95 respirator, and Tyvek coveralls or a surgical gown. Boot covers or impermeable footwear that can withstand cleaning and disinfection should also be worn. All contact surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected with a disinfectant effective against influenza viruses. Veterinary clinics should not allow potentially infected birds to be in the same airspace as influenza susceptible species.

We would like to close by saying that we very much appreciate our private sector colleagues interest in helping us during this outbreak. As always, you all are our eyes and ears in the field. We value you as a resource for providing key information. Please continue your vigilance in helping the country work through this outbreak and never hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns.

*Thomas J Morgan DVM, MPH*

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Connecticut State Veterinarian

*Rachael Fiske DVM*

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Maine State Veterinarian (assistant)

**Lorraine O'Connor DVM**

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Massachusetts State Veterinarian

***Stephen K. Crawford, DVM***

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New Hampshire State Veterinarian

**Scott  
Marshall, DVM**

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Rhode Island State Veterinarian

*[Handwritten signature]* DVM

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Vermont State Veterinarian