

Ag Column  
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## Avian Influenza Threatens Area

Birds get the flu too! There has been much concern over the past several months about aquatic birds spreading Avian Influenza as they migrate south. This is a virus that affects wild aquatic birds around the world and can affect domestic poultry flocks and other bird animals according to the US Center for Disease Control.

According to Dr. Lew Strickland, UT Extension Veterinarian, local backyard poultry owners can prevent Avian Influenza exposure to their flock by adhering to some basic biosecurity measures. These basic preventative measures can go a long way in preventing diseases and outbreaks before they happen. Dr. Strickland recommends the following biosecurity guidelines for keeping your poultry healthy:

### **Keep Your Distance**

Restrict access to your birds. If visitors have birds of their own, do not let them near your birds. Game birds and migratory waterfowl should not have contact with your flock because they are carriers of Avian Influenza.

### **Keep It Clean**

Practice good sanitation around your birds. It is recommended to wear gloves once inside the area while cleaning cages and changing food and water daily. Clean and disinfect equipment that comes in contact with your birds or their droppings, including cages and tools. Remove manure before disinfecting and discard gloves once finished. Properly dispose of dead birds.

### **Don't Haul Disease Home**

If you have been near other birds or bird owners, such as at a feed store, clean and disinfect car and truck tires, poultry cages, and equipment before going home. If your birds have mingled with others, keep them separate for 2 weeks and keep new birds isolated for 30 days. If you share tools or poultry supplies with other bird owners, clean and disinfect them.

### **Know the Warning Signs of Infectious Bird Diseases.**

Early detection is important to prevent the spread of disease. These are some of the clinical signs that can be present in a flock infected with Avian Influenza:

- Sudden increase in bird deaths in your flock
- Sneezing, gasping for air, coughing, and nasal discharge
- Watery and green diarrhea
- Lack of energy and poor appetite
- Drop in egg production or soft- or thin-shelled misshapen eggs
- Swelling around the eyes, neck, and head
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs

**Report Sick Birds**

Don't wait. If your birds are sick or dying, call your local cooperative extension office, local veterinarian, the State Veterinarian, or U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Veterinary Services office to report. Making biosecurity a part of your daily routine while caring for your birds can decrease the chance of AI showing up on your doorstep.