



Reducing risks of introducing the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus onto dairy farms (6th edition)

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No cases of HPAI have been detected on Canadian dairy farms to date. However, given its ongoing spread in several US states, prevention remains crucial. When Canadian farms heighten their biosecurity measures, they help prevent the introduction of the virus and minimize various transmission risks.

According to American outbreak investigations, the virus appears to be spreading to dairy farms in two main ways: 1) the introduction of an infected cow into a herd, and 2) the transmission of the virus on clothing, footwear or vehicles used by people who visit or work on multiple farms.

Prevent HPAI in your dairy herd:

- **Avoid cattle movement into your herd**
- **If you must purchase cattle, test for HPAI before they enter your herd, or before and after a cattle event**
- **Restrict visitors.**

If you see clinical signs that look like HPAI in your herd:

- **Contact your veterinarian**
- **Isolate affected animals.**

Awareness saves you money

As with any disease, it is good to know how farmers can manage a situation if needed, to get help to contain the disease promptly and get back to normal business as promptly as possible. Identifying and containing the disease swiftly also reduces the potential costs to the farm, provide effective treatment to sick cows, and reduce the risk of spread/ possible contamination to other animals (including cats and dogs), to other farms, and to humans in direct contact with a sick cow.

Based on costs of some cases reported in the US, the American Association of Bovine Veterinarians estimated the costs of the disease to be close to \$200 per cow when a herd was affected with avian flu. Clinical cows are costing about US\$950 each, mainly related to loss in production and premature animal sale. Ongoing vigilance and proactively working to keep it out of Canadian farms remains the best way forward. Everyone in the sector can play a role in implementing effective strategies that protect animal and human health on farms with the recommendations below.¹

Recommendations to protect a farm against the introduction of HPAI

If bringing new cows in the herd

- Avoid animal movements as much as possible. It is a good time to keep a closed herd.
- If buying and introducing new animals to the herd:
 - Source animals from herds with a known health status.
 - Ask questions; avoid sourcing animals from areas where HPAI is present in dairy herds.
 - Have new cows tested before bringing them into your herd.
 - Isolate and monitor new animals for clinical signs for at least 14 days, especially if there is a risk these animals were in contact with animals from affected areas.

¹ Recommendations are based on [proAction](#)® biosecurity measures, the guide to [Prevent an Outbreak \(Being Vigilant about Animal Introductions\)](#), and guidance from CFIA and other experts.

- Test isolated animals 2-3 weeks after arrival even if they seem to be healthy. Perform test on bulk tank. When tests are negative, you can return them to the herd.
- Update your proAction procedures, train staff on your heightened biosecurity practices, and increase herd monitoring for signs of illness.
- Report animal movements to DairyTrace / SimpliTrace, ideally within 24 hours to strengthen Canada's rapid traceback capacity.

Managing risk of transmission when cows are commingled

- Avoid events where cows of different herds are co-mingled as much as possible.
- If moving animals to an event and re-introducing animals back to the herd after co-mingling offsite:
 - Ask questions to the event organizer about biosecurity measures; consider avoiding if they accept animals from areas where HPAI is present in dairy herds.
 - Have cows tested before bringing them to the event. Bring only cattle that show no sign of any sickness to the event.
 - When moving cattle, start with a cleaned and disinfected livestock trailer. Avoid co-mingling animals from different farms in the trailer.
 - Bring all your own clean & disinfected equipment and do not share it with others at the event.
 - Isolate and monitor returning animals for clinical signs for at least 14 days.
 - Test isolated animals 2-3 weeks after arrival even if they seem to be healthy. Perform test on bulk tank. When tests are negative, return animals to the herd.
 - Update proAction procedures for re-introduction of cattle accordingly, and train staff.
 - Report animal movements to DairyTrace / SimpliTrace, within 24 hours to strengthen Canada's rapid traceback capacity.

Limiting the potential spread via people and equipment moving between premises

- Limit visitors to your barn and areas where animals are housed to essential suppliers.
- Keep a log of all visitors in case traceback becomes necessary.
- If service providers (or employee) must have close contact with your cattle:
 - Ensure they wear only clean clothes/coveralls and disinfect or change boots and any equipment they bring before entering.
 - If they are in contact with a 'sick animal area', they should also wear gloves and mask.
 - Bag boots, coveralls and equipment when leaving a 'sick area' to avoid spreading possible viruses elsewhere.
 - Clean and disinfect boots and equipment after leaving this area.
- Restrict access² to unnecessary vehicles that move between farms as they can also be a vector carrying and transmitting live viruses.

Signs to watch for on the farm

If you detect the following symptoms [or clinical signs](#) in your herd, contact your veterinarian immediately:

- sudden decrease in milk production;
- colostrum-like consistency of milk;
- decreased feed intake with decreased rumen motility;
- respiratory signs, including clear nasal discharge;
- lethargy, dehydration, dry stool or diarrhea, sometimes fever.

You may also want to watch for the following:

- If farm cats exhibit unusual signs, particularly neurological signs, contact your veterinarian.
- If you find dead or neurologic animals (for example wild birds, raccoons, etc.) on the

² Designate areas for vehicles at a distance from where animals are housed.

premises, do not handle them. Contact your local office of the [Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative \(CWHC\)](#).

What to do if HPAI is suspected or confirmed on your farm

- Contact your regular herd veterinarian.
- Isolate sick cows (those with clinical signs) immediately so they do not have access to the same feed or water as healthy cattle.
- Milk sick cows separately and last, before disinfecting the milking system.
 - For your personal safety, wear [masks, non-ventilated goggles, gloves and protective coverall or apron when handling sick cows](#).
 - When milking all cows, especially any sick cows, wear gloves that you can disinfect or at least rinse between cows.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Remove and bag protective clothing worn when handling sick animals to avoid spreading viruses elsewhere (to healthy cattle, other species, to car, house, etc.).
 - Shower as soon as possible after.
- Train staff and family on protective measures and personal protection equipment to take to safeguard human health.

Handling affected raw milk

- Milk sick cows last and discard the milk. Sanitize milking equipment before using on healthy cows to avoid potential spread to other cows.
- Feed milk replacer or pasteurize any farm milk that is given to calves, cats, or any other animals on the farm (e.g. bring milk to 72°C for 15 seconds or 63 degrees for 30 minutes).

For more details, see the *Question-and-Answer document*.

Useful Links and References

- CFIA: Information on [HPAI in livestock](#)
- CFIA: Testing cattle for HPAI [Guidance for private veterinarians](#)
- Biosecurity resources: [Preventing an Outbreak: Being Vigilant about Animal Introductions](#)
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety: [Reduce human exposure to HPAI](#)
- Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative (CWHC): [Contact your local office](#)
- Animal Health Canada: [News and Updates on Detections of H5N1 in Dairy Cattle](#)
- APHIS (USDA): [Updates and Resources](#)