

## “Ask the Vet/Ask the Nutritionist”

**“Avian Influenza has been in the news lately. I only have a few laying hens. How can I protect my hens from getting sick? What are the symptoms of Avian Influenza?”**

*~Homesteading Hobby Hens ~*

The Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza virus (HPAI) has been an epidemic in the poultry industry this year causing the destruction of millions of birds, especially in the Midwest. Even if you don't have a commercial operation, it is important to be aware of the signs and symptoms to try to minimize the spread of the disease. HPAI can infect all poultry including turkeys, game birds and waterfowl. The virus is found in feces, saliva and respiratory secretions. HPAI is capable of being spread through the air in addition to direct contact with infected birds or contaminated equipment.

The best way to protect your hens is through prevention. It is thought that the virus initially spread rapidly along the migratory flyways of wild waterfowl; therefore keeping wild waterfowl off your property and away from your hens is the first thing you can do to minimize the risk of HPAI. Enforcing good bio-security protocols (i.e. a 30 day quarantine for all new birds), having a separate set of clothes and shoes specifically for chores that do not leave the farm and limiting access to

your property and flock, are other steps you can take to protect your birds.

Symptoms of HPAI include decreased feed consumption, a drop in egg production, huddling, depression, respiratory symptoms, swollen combs and wattles, greenish watery diarrhea and excessive thirst. The Avian Influenza strain currently



detected in the United States causes no apparent human health concerns. This disease usually results in sudden death and high mortality rates in affected flocks. If you suspect any of your birds have HPAI call your veterinarian immediately and report the infection to your State's Department of Agriculture or Animal Health Agency within one day of having the disease confirmed. You can find more information about HPAI at [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) or [www.datcp.wi.gov](http://www.datcp.wi.gov).

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Please submit your animal health or nutrition questions in writing to:



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