



# Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

## INFORMATION FOR PET OWNERS

Some avian influenza viruses can affect pet animals, such as cats, dogs, and some pocket pets. Since the current highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreak began, many domestic cats (including pet, barn, and feral cats) have been infected and become severely ill or died from HPAI. Pets can be exposed to the virus and possibly infected from direct contact with infected waterfowl (or their environment) or from consuming contaminated raw meat or raw (unpasteurized) milk.

## Symptoms

Infection may cause mild to severe disease, including death. Since symptoms in pets may mimic other respiratory or neurological diseases, HPAI should be considered especially if known risk factors exist. Risk factors for HPAI infection in pets include:

- Recent exposure to animals or premises known to be infected or contaminated with HPAI
- Recent exposure to or ingestion of dead birds (especially wild waterfowl)
- Recent exposure to or ingestion of raw meat
- Recent exposure to or ingestion of raw cow's milk or colostrum

Symptoms of HPAI in pets are best known for cats, but similar signs may be seen in other pet species and include:

- Fever
- Lethargy
- Inappetence
- Conjunctivitis
- Eye and/or nasal discharge
- Difficulty breathing
- Neurological signs (e.g., tremors, seizures, incoordination, or blindness)
- Death

## Prevention

Pet animals can become infected with avian influenza if they eat infected birds (or other infected animals such as mice), contaminated raw meat (including raw pet food/treats), or contaminated raw milk. Pet animals may also become infected from direct exposure to contaminated environments or other infected animals, even though the current risk of mammal-to-mammal transmission is considered low in most situations.

- Do not feed pets undercooked or raw meat, including uncooked or freeze-dried meat-based diets, treats, or animal products
- Do not feed pets raw (unpasteurized) milk or colostrum
- Keep pets away from wild birds, poultry, and cattle (especially in areas with known H5N1 outbreaks)
- Prevent pets from eating birds or other wild animals
- If you interact with any sick or dead animals that may harbor avian influenza virus, change your clothes and shoes and wash hands thoroughly
- If you suspect your pet may be infected with avian influenza, contact your veterinarian immediately