Frequently Asked Questions about HPAI

What's happening with HPAI?

Keeping a steady supply of safe, nutritious eggs to retail customers is the industry's priority. Egg producers are fighting highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) with all their resources and doing everything possible to prevent the disease on egg farms.

Since 2022, egg farmers have been faced with the loss of over one hundred million birds spread across all 50 states, with more than 40 million in 2024.[1] While wild birds and migratory waterfowl have been a threat since the beginning of the outbreak in 2022, the lethal strain of HPAI being detected in dairy cattle is an additional threat that was detected in 2024.[4] HPAI is virulent and aggressive, and it remains a clear and present risk to laying hen flocks.

Avian influenza is devastating for individual farms and the egg industry, and the continued loss of flocks across the nation has had a terrible impact on U.S. egg production.[5] The outbreak of HPAI, now entering its fourth year, has caused a related cascade of disruptions in the nation's egg supply—which has resulted in low-stock situations and volatility in egg pricing.[5]

Getting eggs to our customers remains our priority, but egg production is complex and the system for repopulating our farms and getting hens back to production is deeply strained by ongoing cases. Egg farmers are working with each other and with their teams to get eggs where they are needed, and to recover from HPAI on affected farms, however, with limited availability of chicks and pullets, recovery simply takes longer.

A perfect storm of factors—including evolving migration patterns for wild birds and waterfowl due to changing weather conditions and ongoing cases in dairy cattle—have caused HPAI to threaten U.S. flocks at a time when cage-free transitions at retail and in states where hen housing laws are also becoming effective. This has contributed to regional and retailer-specific shortages.[5]

How is the industry responding to the HPAI threat?

Egg farmers are fighting bird flu with all their resources and doing all they can to prevent the disease on our farms, but bird flu remains a clear and present risk to our flocks. America's egg farmers work around the clock to protect their hens and farms from bird flu and to ensure the safety of the nation's egg supply. Biosecurity—measures taken on farms to prevent disease—is a priority for farmers every day, not just during a disease outbreak.

Egg farmers have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in expansive on-farm biosecurity facilities, practices and equipment. Farms have further enhanced biosecurity protocols in response to the recent HPAI outbreak in dairy cattle and are sharing disease prevention information with dairy farmers, the USDA and state animal health officials.

There is close collaboration among those in the egg, chicken, turkey and dairy farming communities to identify ways to prevent HPAI from spreading. In addition, state and federal regulatory authorities are working hand in hand to limit the occurrence of this disease and to continue HPAI surveillance programs.

U.S. egg farms have the most stringent and comprehensive biosecurity measures of any poultry farms on the planet, including, but not limited to:

- Restricting on-farm access to essential employees only
- Housing hens indoors to prevent access to wild birds and waterfowl
- Limiting movement between farm operations
- Supplying PPE to workers and requiring that protective gear be always used for anyone who enters egg farms
- Working closely with animal health experts and veterinarians to monitor flocks
- Use of Danish entry systems for poultry barns. Upon entry to a barn, employees remove outer clothing and footwear, shower/disinfect and move to a clean area where clean protective clothing is provided. The protocol is completed in reverse when exiting the building
- Washing and sanitizing vehicles and equipment
- Wild bird deterrence efforts
- Employee training and awareness, including delivery drivers

Why are existing efforts to fight the disease not working as effectively as before?

That's what needs to be determined. U.S. egg farms have the most stringent biosecurity measures in the world, but they are not foolproof. The industry, academia and government need to redouble efforts to identify more effective prevention and eradication measures.

How quickly does an egg farm recover from HPAI?

The system of egg production is both complex and time sensitive. When an egg farm is impacted with HPAI, it must go through multiple steps with government approvals before it can repopulate new flocks. This alone can take a minimum of six months.

Egg farmers that are ready to repopulate must obtain chicks in stages to repopulate their farms and raise young hens. Supplies of new chicks also are diminished due to the extensive amount of HPAI repopulation taking place. And once day-old chicks are moved to farms, it can take 18-20 weeks before the hens are ready to produce eggs.

How is the bird flu outbreak impacting egg prices?

The U.S. egg supply is disrupted by an ongoing outbreak of bird flu, which has resulted in volatility in egg prices due to market disruption caused by the strain on the nation's egg supply. Wholesale egg prices are not set by farmers but are determined based on supply and demand in the egg market, like other agricultural commodity products.

It's important to note that the nutritional benefits of eggs remain a great value. A dozen large eggs is 1.5 pounds of high-quality protein that is versatile and delicious, and still sought-after by shoppers and egg lovers alike. According to consumer research AEB conducted in December 2024, nearly 70% of consumers still agree that "eggs are an affordable, high-quality protein,"[6] also demonstrated as the volume of eggs sold at retail has been up year-over-year for 20 plus consecutive months.[7] Egg farmers do not determine retail prices for eggs, and grocery prices for eggs can fluctuate, just like the market, and by individual retailer decisions on marketing and promotion.

Should continued volatility in prices and supply be expected?

U.S. egg producers are working together to fill customer orders as they are able and doing what they can to develop alternate supply plans to address disruptions that may occur.

Unfortunately, egg prices and supplies will continue to fluctuate as egg farms continue to be impacted by HPAI. Egg producers are doing everything they can to keep eggs supplied to customers and to restore their farms to full production but that takes time.

Egg production relies on a complex system, and ongoing cases of HPAI have put enormous stress on this system—and the continued strain is having impacts on egg availability. This has resulted in some out-of-stocks and low supplies in egg cases—sometimes in specific regions or with certain retailers. There also have been disproportionate impacts on supplies of cage-free eggs in states with hen housing laws or on retailers that only sell cage-free eggs.[8] The reality is the egg industry needs a sustained period of four to six months with no additional HPAI detections on egg farms to stabilize supply and allow egg farms time to recover.

There are signs these stressors may have an even greater negative impact on egg availability in the coming months and into the Easter season—but the egg industry remains committed to doing everything possible to address these supply disruptions.

What more can be done?

Egg farmers are working closely with state and federal animal health officials in response to HPAI cases, and they are telling the story of the devastation of bird flu on their farms and on the egg industry. AEB and egg producers believe innovative, effective approaches must be identified to respond to the devastation of HPAI including collaborative, actionable solutions to limit HPAI's impact on the nation's egg farms.

In addition, the egg industry's policy and advocacy organization, United Egg Producers (UEP) is working collaboratively to address legislative, regulatory and advocacy issues impacting egg production, including HPAI.

Sources

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