

# Tackling avian influenza: the role of Veterinary Services

Causing severe, systemic disease in domestic and wild birds, avian influenza has devastating consequences for the poultry industry, farmer's livelihoods, and food security.

**Veterinary Services have a key role to play in the prevention, detection and control of the disease.**

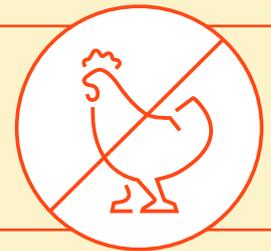


## The global burden of avian influenza

### A threat to animal health leading to:

- The death of infected and exposed birds
- A drop in poultry production and associated products
- Decreased animal welfare

**Mortality rates within poultry flocks are often up to 100%**



### A disease with severe socioeconomic impact including:

- Major financial and psychological repercussions for farmers
- Significant job losses in the whole poultry production chain
- Heightened prices of poultry meat and products

**Food security and international trade are heavily impacted**



Lately, the global spread of avian influenza has raised more concerns, with an unprecedented number of outbreaks, the identification of the disease in new geographic regions, unusual die-offs in wild birds, and infections in an increasing number of mammalian species.

## A threat to everyone's health

Besides the grave and more visible impacts of avian influenza on poultry, the disease can also affect:

**Wild birds.** As endangered or vulnerable species can become infected, it can threaten biodiversity and the health of our ecosystems.

**Land and sea mammals.** The recent increase of cases in mammals could lead to a better adaptation of avian influenza viruses to these species and therefore a higher risk to animals other than birds, as well as to biodiversity, and potentially humans.

**Humans.** The zoonotic transmission of avian influenza from birds to humans is rare and has never led to a sustained human-to-human transmission. It usually occurs in very specific contexts (repeated human exposure to infected birds, most often to backyard poultry and live bird markets). Yet, the clinical signs in humans can be very severe.

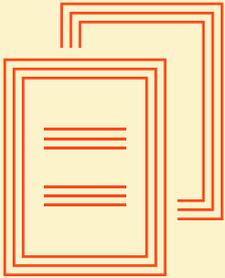


### Can avian influenza become a pandemic?

It is critical to monitor the evolution of avian influenza viruses to assess the risk of transmission to humans and other species, their ability to cause disease and their potential pandemic risk.

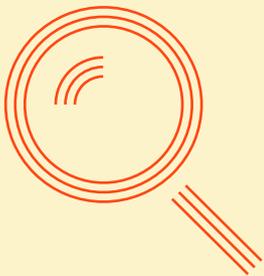
# The pivotal role of Veterinary Services

Veterinary Services are frontline actors in the fight against influenza. They can take numerous actions:



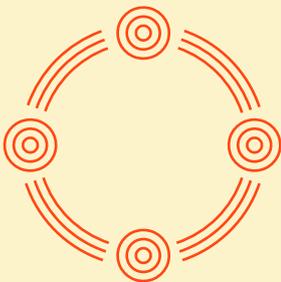
## Prevention

- Promote the implementation of **biosecurity measures** in all operations involving poultry, notably to prevent any contact between domestic and wild birds
- Ensure that farmers and workers who have daily contact with poultry and people interacting or living near wild birds are **well aware of the disease's evolution** in their country as well as on the measures they can take to prevent its spread
- Develop strong certification programmes that guarantee safe international trade, in **compliance with WOAH international standards**



## Detection and response

- **Run surveillance programmes** in domestic, wild birds, and other at-risk species
- Ensure the **timely reporting of avian influenza outbreaks** to the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) and share information (including epidemiological and genetic sequence data) on circulating strains with the international scientific community
- Implement appropriate **control measures in affected areas**



## Collaboration with other sectors

- Work jointly with the **human, wildlife and environmental health sectors**, using a One Health approach. Multisectoral collaboration is key to efficiently monitor the evolution of avian influenza viruses and investigate mortality events in wild birds and mammals
- Partner with the **private sector**
- **Conduct research and development** across various scientific disciplines (including social science) to better understand the drivers of avian influenza epidemics, and inform more effective control and management strategies in the future

## Discover our resources



Regular [situation reports](#) to follow the disease evolution



The [WAHIS system](#) and its [distribution list](#) to share the latest disease notifications



Science-based [standards on avian influenza](#)



[WOAH Reference Laboratories](#) to support on disease diagnosis and control



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for Animal Health  
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