

Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs

Office of the Minister

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Ontario

April 8, 2022

Doug Sweet
CAO
Town of Essex
dsweet@essex.ca

Dear Mr. Sweet,

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has confirmed cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) in Ontario.

While the CFIA leads the disease response for highly pathogenic avian influenza, and has imposed permitting requirements in defined areas of the province, I am writing to inform you and your constituents that Ontario is taking action to help limit the spread of the virus in the province.

On the advice and recommendation of the Chief Veterinarian for Ontario, I have issued a Minister's Order under the *Animal Health Act, 2009*, for the purpose of limiting the commingling of birds from different locations in Ontario, in order to reduce the likelihood of disease transmission in domestic birds by limiting direct contact.

Effective April 9, 2022, this Order temporarily prohibits events where birds commingle, such as bird shows, bird sales and swaps, portions of fairs where birds are exhibited, sport and educational displays where birds are brought from multiple locations, vaccination gatherings for birds from multiple locations, and prohibits the movement of birds to those events. Temporarily reducing direct contact between birds from different locations will limit the spread of avian influenza and protect flock health. This Order will expire on May 9, 2022, but may be extended if required.

This Order builds on the government's actions to limit the spread of avian influenza, including increasing surveillance and testing capacity and providing education and resources for all those along the poultry supply chain. As well, the Ontario government has expanded mental health supports for farmers and their families.

I also continue to encourage your constituents to further enhance their biosecurity measures.

If your municipality permits backyard flocks, I strongly encourage you to share these essential resources with them. Additionally, I am asking you to take a proactive approach in limiting public events that involve the commingling of birds.

Avian influenza subtype H5N1 has been identified in Ontario, and eight other provinces, including Nova Scotia, and Alberta, as well as numerous US states. Avian influenza is not a threat to food safety but impacts domesticated and wild birds. Ontario poultry and eggs are safe to eat when, as always, proper handling and cooking takes place. People working with poultry should take additional precautions and are strongly encouraged to follow all public health guidelines and maintain strict biosecurity.

I understand that temporarily stopping participation in these activities is disappointing news for many Ontario farmers, bird owners and hobbyists. By pausing these activities in the short term, I firmly believe we will help protect the poultry industry for the long term.

For more information on the Minister's Order, please visit [NEWSROOM](#) and [OMAFRA's Avian Influenza webpage](#).

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs continues to monitor this quickly developing situation and may implement further measures as part of the response to this disease.

I appreciate your cooperation as we continue to work together to enhance biosecurity and reduce the spread of avian influenza.

Sincerely,



Lisa M. Thompson

Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Resources:

- [OMAFRA Avian Influenza Website](#)
- [CFIA Avian Biosecurity – Protect Poultry, Prevent Disease](#)
- [Checklist to Implementing an Effective Biosecurity Plan](#)
- [Suggested Solutions for Farmers – Deterring Migratory Birds](#)
- [Biosecurity Recommendations for Small Flock Poultry Owners](#)
- [How to prevent and detect disease in backyard flocks and pet birds](#)
- [Biosecurity for Small Poultry Flocks During High Risk Periods for Avian Influenza](#)
- [Mental health resources for farmers](#)