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*We will provide industry-leading, reliable, knowledgeable service, in a friendly, courteous and timely manner, to benefit our clients and the communities we serve.*

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## **APRIL 2024 NEWSLETTER**

### **HPAI In Dairy Cattle**

HPAI stands for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. It is an influenza virus commonly known as the bird flu. It is a highly contagious virus which is mainly spread through wild birds.



As of April 3<sup>rd</sup>, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) have announced confirmed cases of HPAI in dairy cattle herds in Texas, Kansas, Michigan, New Mexico and Idaho. A case in Ohio has a presumptive positive but has yet to be confirmed. According to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) there have been no confirmed cases in Canada as of this newsletter's printing (April 6<sup>th</sup>).

#### **How is infection introduced to and spread throughout a herd?**

The virus primarily circulates in wild migratory birds. Fecal droppings contain the virus and act as the primary source for introduction into herds. In addition, recent developments have shown that cow to cow transmission cannot be ruled out at this time. The mechanism of transmission (respiratory secretions, urine, etc.) is currently unknown. The virus can also spread via fomites such as boots, equipment (vehicles, etc.) and people (hands+).

#### **What are the primary clinical signs?**

Reduced feed consumption and rapid decline in milk production.

What we know at this current time, to date, from cases reported is that infection peaks at about 3-4 days and lasts for 10-14 days. Older dairy cattle seem to be more clinically affected and it appears that it is mostly affecting cattle in mid to late lactation. Some cows produce a thicker, more concentrated, colostrum like milk. Abnormal manure – either firm/tacky or diarrhea – is commonly seen. Cattle appear to be recovering from infection, with very few mortalities reported.

## How do we treat HPAI?

Since HPAI is a viral infection, there is no true treatment other than supportive care. Antibiotics would only be indicated if a secondary bacterial infection is suspected.

## What steps can you take to protect your herd?

**BIOSECURITY!!!** (Yes, like we discuss in your CQMs).

Recommendations include:

- Limiting visitors on farm and, when visitors do drop in, ensure that they have clean footwear and clothing.
- Having a designated area to wash hands and scrub boots/wear boot covers when walking into barns.
- Preventing cattle from interacting with wildlife – especially birds and mammals showing clinical signs (neurologic) – and/or the carcasses of dead animals.
- Preventing birds from having access to cattle feed.
- Limiting your cattle's exposure to standing water sources.
- Maintaining a closed herd. Any new introductions should be quarantined for 21 days.
- Isolating sick cattle from the rest of the herd.

## What to do if you find sick or dead birds or other wildlife on your property

It is encouraged that you please contact Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative at 1-866-673-4781 or go online to fill out a form if deceased birds or other wildlife are found.

## Risk to human health.

While the disease has potential for affecting animal health and causing economic loss, currently there is very little risk to human health. When working directly with livestock, workers should take precautions (ex. wearing gloves) when handling animals. Pasteurized milk products and properly cooked meat are safe for human consumption.

Your Linwood Vets team is continuing to watch this disease closely and we are here to answer any questions you may have. In the meantime, it is recommended that producers implement heightened biosecurity measures to prevent introduction of the disease into your herds.

## More resources:

<https://www.avma.org/news/press-releases/highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza-detected-tx-ks-dairy-cattle>

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2024/p0401-avian-flu.html>

<https://www.canadiancattlemen.ca/daily/dairy-bird-flu-cases-creep-closer-to-canada/>

<https://inspection.canada.ca/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/avian-influenza/latest-bird-flu-situation/hpai-in-livestock/eng/1711895796746/1711895797730>



In April we mark World Veterinary Day on Saturday the 27th. Unlike human medicine where only one species is studied, veterinarians are required to understand all major species; companion animals including cats, dogs and small furries (such as rabbits, rats, hamsters) farm/production animals including horses, cows, small ruminants, pigs and poultry. They even study exotic and wildlife medicine! Because the veterinary profession is so vast a lot of people graduate and go into an area of the profession that they are most passionate about. **All of your Linwood vets are passionate about the agriculture sector and chose the life of a farm vet!**