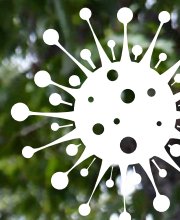
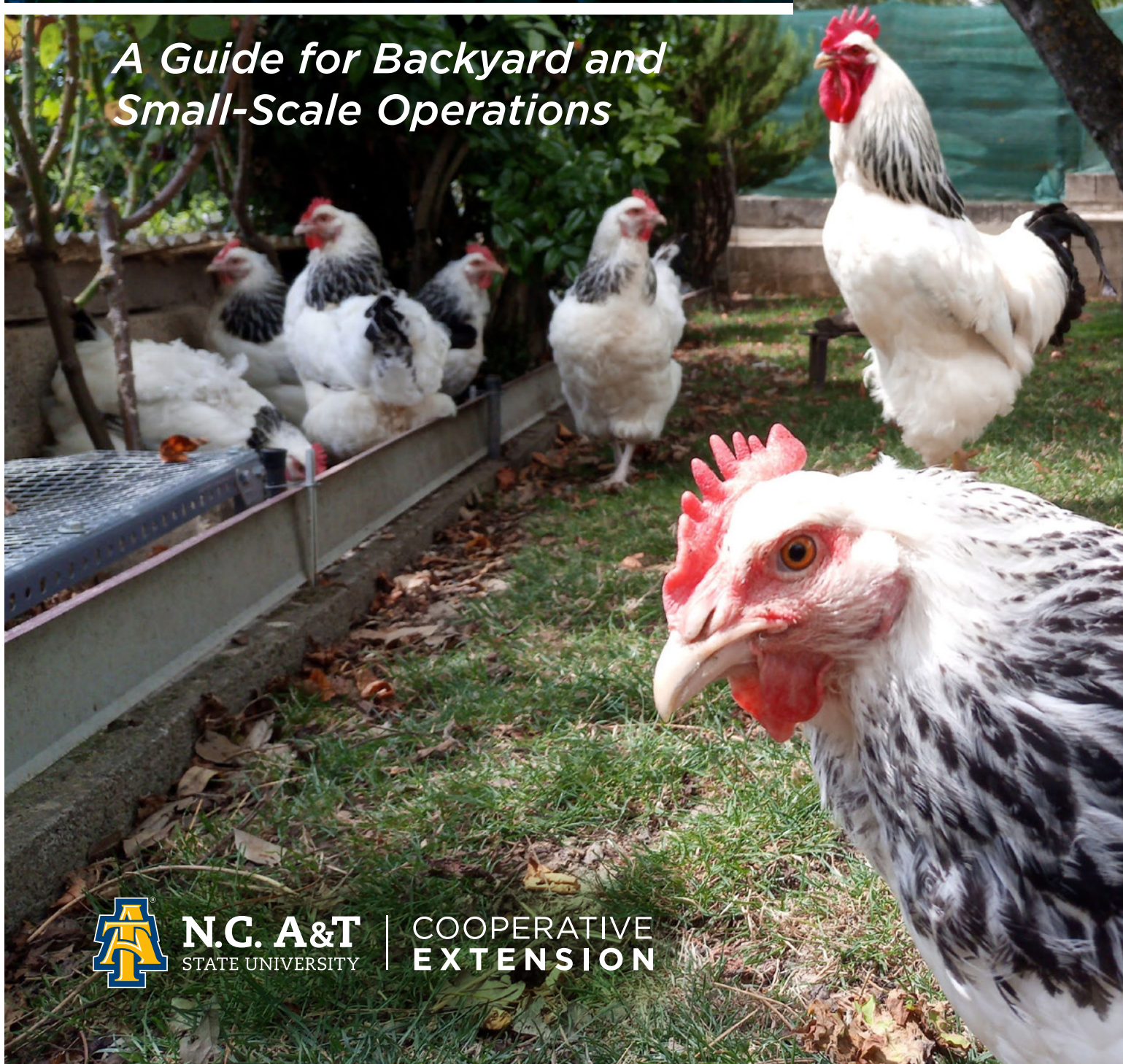




# FIGHTING BIRD FLU



*A Guide for Backyard and  
Small-Scale Operations*



**N.C. A&T**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

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## What is bird flu and why should I care?

Bird flu, also known as avian influenza, is a highly contagious and deadly disease that affects both wild and domesticated birds. There are two types of bird flu:

**Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI):** Causes mild illness but can evolve into a more severe form.

**Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI):** Causes severe illness and high death rates.

The disease has already been detected in flocks across multiple counties in North Carolina, so extra caution is needed to prevent its spread. It's not just large poultry operations that need to take precautions—anyone raising poultry, whether for food, business or as pets in their backyard, must be vigilant in preventing the spread of bird flu.

### Bird flu:

- Kills 90% to 100% of infected birds within 48 hours of infection.
- Can spread to other animals.
- Cases have been reported in humans but are rare and have mild symptoms.
- Human cases usually occur in people who have direct contact with sick or infected birds.



## How does bird flu spread?

- Infected wild bird droppings and contaminated soil.
- Contact with infected birds.
- Contaminated equipment, feed, or water.
- Clothing and shoes of people moving between flocks.

## Why are backyard flocks at high risk?

- Increased contact with wild birds.
- Limited biosecurity practices.
- Frequent human interaction.
- Presence of mixed-age birds.
- Closeness to neighboring flocks.

Bird flu can spread quickly, leading to devastating losses for backyard flocks. Understanding the disease and taking steps to prevent it is the best way to protect your flock, your farm, and the larger poultry community.

## Common signs and symptoms in poultry

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- A brown chicken is shown in profile, facing left. It has a red comb and wattle. Several virus-like icons (spheres with spikes) are placed around the chicken to highlight specific symptoms.
- Purple discoloration of wattles/combs
  - Swelling around head, neck, and eyes
  - Ruffled feathers
  - Nasal discharge, coughing, and sneezing
  - Gasping for air (difficulty breathing)
  - Lack of appetite
  - Decreased activity/fatigue
  - Stumbling or falling down
  - Sudden, unexplained death
  - Reduced egg production
  - Green or watery diarrhea
  - Purple discoloration of leg/feet

## Practice biosecurity to prevent spreading bird flu

- Isolate your flock from wild birds and other poultry.
- Control movement in and out of poultry areas (limit or avoid visitors).
- Clean and disinfect hands, boots, and tools before and after handling birds.
- Do not share equipment or vehicles with other flock owners or neighbors. If you must, remove feces, feathers, and litter and clean everything with soap and water before and after it comes in contact with your flock.
- Use personal protective equipment like washable footwear/shoe covers, gloves, and masks when handling birds, droppings, or cleaning coops. These items should be worn only while working with birds and should be changed between flocks to prevent the spread of disease.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling poultry.

### Proper housing and containment:

- House poultry in secure, enclosed areas to prevent contact with wild birds.
- Provide a roof over the enclosure to prevent contact with bird poop from outside birds.
- Maintain a clean, dry, and well-ventilated coop. Use a disinfectant that is registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and indicates that it is effective against avian influenza and other poultry diseases for cleaning.
- Avoid overcrowding to reduce stress and disease risk.



- Keep wild birds and rodents out of poultry houses and coops.
- Avoid adding new birds to the flock/coop during the outbreak. If you need to add new birds, keep them quarantined for at least 30 days before introducing them to your flock.

### Feed and water safety:

- Keep food and water covered to prevent contamination from wild birds.
- Provide clean, fresh water daily.
- Store feed in rodent-proof containers to reduce pest attraction. Prevent wild birds from accessing the food and water.

### Limited exposure to high-risk areas:

- Avoid visiting live bird markets, swap meets, or other poultry farms.
- Do not handle wild birds or allow them near your flock.

### Monitoring and health checks:

- Observe birds daily for signs of illness, including respiratory issues, lethargy, or loss of appetite.
- Isolate sick birds from healthy ones immediately.
- Monitor flocks for unexplained deaths and unusual behavior.



# Think your birds may have bird flu?

## Report unusual illness and death

If your flock shows sudden illness or unexplained deaths, report it immediately:

- **County Extension Office**  
Contact your county extension office for guidance.
- **N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services**  
Veterinary Division: 919-707-3250  
After-hours emergency: 919-280-6296
- **N.C. Wildlife Helpline:** 866-318-2401  
For wild birds or suspected bird flu cases
- **USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS):** 866-536-7593  
After you report, a federal or state animal health official will contact you to learn more about your flock and operation.

## Educate yourself and stay updated:

- Keep up to date with local and national guidelines on bird flu.
- Follow recommendations from the USDA, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and your state extension office.

## Human health precaution

Cases of bird flu have been reported in humans.

- If you work with poultry and develop flu-like symptoms, contact a doctor immediately.
- Visit the CDC website for more information on symptoms in humans.

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[www.ncat.edu/extension](http://www.ncat.edu/extension)

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# Resources for More Information

## N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

Provides free testing, diagnosis, and technical assistance.

<https://www.ncagr.gov/divisions/veterinary/AvianInfluenza>

List of commercial veterinary clinics in North Carolina

<https://www.ncagr.gov/veterinary-nc-prep-veterinary-clinics>

## USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Leads federal response coordination for avian influenza.

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza>

Disease Prevention Checklist:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fsc-birds-checklist-english.pdf>

## Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Provides information on avian flu and its impact on human health.

[www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/](http://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/)

## NC State Extension Poultry Science

Offers educational resources and best practices for poultry health and biosecurity.

<https://poultry.ces.ncsu.edu>

## National Poultry Improvement Plan

Offers biosecurity and disease monitoring programs for poultry producers.

<https://www.poultryimprovement.org/>