

## [EFSA: #NOBIRDFLU CAMPAIGN TO FIGHT AVIAN INFLUENZA](#)



In recent months – even years – **avian influenza** has frequently been in the spotlight, sometimes with **alarmist tones** that have caused concern not only among farmers but also among citizens and consumers. In reality, **alongside the actual risks, there are effective tools to manage the situation.** For this reason, **EFSA launched the [#NoBirdFlu campaign](#)**, a European initiative aimed at **promoting good biosecurity practices and**

**providing clear and reliable information.** The goal is not only to curb the spread of the virus but also to reduce fear and unnecessary alarm, helping everyone better understand what it is and what can be done in practice to protect both animals and people.

### ***A powerful virus to keep under control***

[Avian influenza](#) is a viral disease that primarily affects birds, both wild and farmed. Some subtypes, such as **H5 and H7 strains**, can become particularly aggressive and trigger outbreaks with high animal mortality. Today, attention is focused mainly on the **H5N1 virus**, now widespread in Europe, Asia, and America. **Migratory birds are the main “carriers” of the infection**, as they transport the virus from one continent to another along their seasonal routes. In recent years, the situation has become even more complex: **avian influenza no longer follows a seasonal pattern** but is present in Europe year-round, even during the summer months.

When the virus enters a farm, it spreads very quickly and can wipe out entire groups of animals, with devastating consequences. To contain outbreaks, it is often necessary to cull thousands, sometimes even millions, of poultry. The impacts are severe: **farmers suffer significant economic losses, while the market sees reduced availability of meat and eggs, leading to inevitable price increases for consumers.** In rare cases, some strains have passed from animals to humans, particularly among those who work closely with infected chickens, turkeys, or ducks. At present, however, **human-to-human transmission does not pose a significant risk**, although experts continue to monitor potential mutations that could increase its likelihood.

For this reason, the World Health Organisation (**WHO**) and the European Food Safety Authority (**EFSA**) closely **monitor the evolution of the virus.** [According to EFSA data](#), between 8 March and 6 June 2025, a total of 365 detections of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5 virus were reported across 24 European countries. Of these, 167 cases occurred in domestic birds and 198 in wild birds. The virus was predominantly H5N1, with most detections in western, central, and southeastern Europe. **Among wild birds, waterfowl —particularly swans and geese —were the most affected,**

**although gulls were also affected.** Regarding domestic animals, there were also reports of virus detections in domestic cats and wild carnivores in Europe, including in the United Kingdom.

### ***The European #NoBirdFlu campaign***

For the general population, the risk remains low, but **it is essential to adopt preventive measures to protect farms and prevent the spread of the virus.** This is why EFSA launched [the European #NoBirdFlu campaign](#), aiming to provide essential information on **farm biosecurity** to help prevent the introduction and stop the spread of **avian influenza**. Whether it involves a large farm, a small backyard poultry operation, or anyone visiting farms for work, consistently **following a few key steps and adhering to simple but fundamental rules can make a significant difference in protecting animal health.**

The first measure concerns access to barns and poultry houses: **people, vehicles, and equipment should enter only when strictly necessary and always after thorough disinfection.** Even small traces of contamination can carry the virus from one place to another, so **it is essential to sanitise people, vehicles, tools, and cages whenever moving between farms.** It is advisable to wear clean clothing, wash hands and footwear, and, if possible, use garments reserved exclusively for farm work. At the entrance, disinfectant footbaths or disposable shoe covers can provide additional protection.

Another key strategy is the so-called **“all-in, all-out” approach**, which involves **bringing animals of the same age together and removing them at the end of the production cycle.** This reduces the number of contacts and visits to the farm, thereby lowering the risk of disease spread. **On family-run or small-scale farms,** where this method cannot be fully applied, **it is still essential to quarantine new animals before introducing them to the group,** and to check their health status and veterinary documents.

After each production cycle, **all areas must be carefully cleaned and disinfected.** It is important to clearly distinguish between “clean” areas, where the animals are kept, and “dirty” areas, exposed to the outside, to prevent contamination. **Maintenance of the facilities is equally essential:** efficient drainage systems, proper insulation, adequate ventilation, and constant rodent control all help to keep the environment safe and healthy.

It is also important to **avoid mixing different species, such as chickens, ducks, and turkeys,** because some diseases can circulate unnoticed in one species and then quickly spread to others. **Domestic or backyard animals should also be kept away from poultry.** To help staff and visitors follow these rules, signs, barriers, or separate pathways can be used to clearly differentiate high-risk areas from protected ones.

**Wild birds pose an additional threat by introducing the virus into farms.** It is therefore crucial to store feed in closed containers, prevent standing water that may attract birds, and **protect poultry houses with suitable nets or fences.** Vegetation around the structures should be kept short and tidy to discourage wildlife, while regular inspections and, if necessary, deterrents help keep intruders away.

**Waste management also plays a fundamental role in preventing avian influenza:** manure, leftover feed, and carcasses must be disposed of quickly and safely to avoid attracting unwanted animals. Similarly, **water and feed for the animals must always be clean and free from contamination**; water, in particular, should never come from open sources, but only from secure supplies.

### ***Improvisation is not advisable***

**EFSA warns that if any suspicious symptoms are observed on a farm**, such as reduced appetite, respiratory difficulties, sudden deaths, or unusual behaviours, **it is essential to report them immediately to a veterinarian or the competent authorities**. Timely intervention greatly increases the chances of containing a potential outbreak. The same applies if dead wild birds or mammals are found nearby: **improvisation is not advisable**, and professionals should always be consulted.

**Avian influenza is a complex issue that intertwines animal health, food safety, and public health. At present, it does not pose a direct threat to the general population. But, it requires attention and collaboration among farmers, veterinarians, and authorities to prevent its spread and protect food security.**

To support these efforts, **EFSA and the European veterinary authorities provide a wide range of useful materials on their website**, including posters, infographics, stickers, and social media posts, which farmers, veterinarians, and operators can use to promote good practices and become true “**biosecurity champions**.” Every small daily action can make a difference: **protecting animals means protecting everyone’s health**.

