

HPAI is a controlled disease under the Animal Diseases Act (Act No. 35 of 1984)

Abattoirs: HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI)



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HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA IS A CONTROLLED DISEASE UNDER THE ANIMAL DISEASES ACT (ACT 35 OF 1984)

What is highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)?

- HPAI is characterized by sudden onset, severe illness, and rapid death, with a mortality rate that can approach 100% in poultry. Certain strains, such as H5N1, may also affect humans.
- It is not transmitted from hen to chick through the egg.
- HPAI spreads through direct or indirect contact (respiratory discharges, feces or aerosol) between birds.
- It is introduced to domestic poultry by wild birds, particularly migratory water fowl.
- Birds often present with multiple areas of hemorrhage in the caecal tonsils, around the heart, fat and occasionally the muscles as well as an enlarged spleen at post-mortem. There may be red discoloration of the shanks and feet.
- There is no cure for HPAI in poultry, infected birds have to be destroyed to prevent spread.
- If you suspect an outbreak you are legally obligated to notify your nearest state veterinarian or animal technician
 - They will assist you in controlling the outbreak and preventing further spread.
- Routine vaccination is not allowed in South Africa. In special/ exceptional cases and with the approval of the State Vet authorities inactivated vaccines may be used in breeders that are very valuable.



HPAI in humans

- In humans, the disease is characterized by primary viral pneumonia and multi-organ failure leading to serious clinical disease or death.
- Those most at risk are those that work with poultry daily. Transmission can occur through direct or indirect contact with infected birds. No cases have been reported from eating infected poultry. However, infected poultry is immediately removed from the food chain before it is consumed.
- Currently avian influenza in humans has a mortality rate of 50%.
- There are no H5N1 vaccines commercially available for humans.



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- If you work with poultry and you develop a cough or fever, it is important to contact your doctor and tell them you work with poultry. Treatment with Oseltamivir and Zanamivir within 48 hours, do have significant protective effects.

Prevention

Wear protective clothing (gloves, safety glasses, and a mask) when working with suspicious poultry.

Immediately report sudden high mortalities in poultry to the State Veterinarian. In the case that a diagnosis of HPAI has been confirmed, all birds have to be slaughtered humanely and their carcasses disposed of according to OIE guidelines.

References

Karama, M., 2022. Zoonoses and occupational health. s.l.:Section VPH, Department Paraclinical sciences, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria.

Smith, P., 2023. Section Poultry Health, Student notes, Viral diseases. s.l.:University of Pretoria.



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