

WHAT IS GOING ON WITH HPAI?



An Update for the Georgia Game Bird Industry, January 6, 2025

AN ON-GOING OUTBREAK

- The HPAI outbreak that started in February 2022 is still ongoing. It is a worldwide event, with wild and domestic birds infected around the globe, endangering some species that already struggle with their survival status.
- Over 150 species of wild birds have been affected by this virus in the US. In Georgia, several species of ducks, as well as bald eagles and black vultures, have been affected most severely, as recently as December 2024.
- In the US, high numbers of cases tend to correlate with wild bird migration seasons (spring and fall), as wild birds on the move contaminate the environment with the virus in their droppings. We are at well over 1,000 detections in domestic birds now, with 130 million birds depopulated to control the spread of the virus. In between migrations, the virus can survive in ponds and in the environment, especially if damp and cold.
- After spikes of cases in the spring and fall of 2022, the spring and fall of 2023 and the spring of 2024, the virus seemed to slow down in the fall of 2024, only to re-emerge closer to the start of winter (November 2024).

DETECTIONS IN MAMMALS

- Over the span of the outbreak, over 400 detections of the virus have occurred in wild mammals, especially harbor seals and red foxes. More recently, dairy cattle herds have tested positive, and this has led to aggressive cattle movement restrictions and testing programs throughout the US. Georgia has had no positive detections in dairy cattle. There have been no detections in beef cattle anywhere in the US.
- The CDC still considers humans at low risk of getting infected with the virus at this time.

PROTECTING GA'S GAME BIRDS

- Follow your line of separation procedures: use farm dedicated boots going into and coming out of a house. **Remember: Inside clean, Outside dirty.**
- Because Game birds are not all-in all-out, movement into and out of the houses is required to sell birds throughout the flock. LIMIT unnecessary people and movements when catching birds for customers. Clean non-disposable crates before they return to the farm from customers and do not enter holding pens on a customer's property.
- Multiple points of entry into pens or houses increase the risk of introducing disease.
- Utilize Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Do not allow **anyone** in your pens or houses without PPE.
- Flight pen growers should be vigilant with net maintenance.
- Properly maintain bait stations to reduce rodent pressure.
- Avoid contact with wild birds. Do not attract them or allow them to congregate with your flock.
- Properly dispose of mortality to discourage scavenging.
- Do not allow domestic pets into work rooms or bird houses
- Good biosecurity is within your control. **Always** take the necessary steps to protect your birds and investment.

