



PRAIRIE LIVESTOCK
V E T E R I N A R I A N S

Avian Influenza

**How can Industry Personnel Help
Improve the Producer's Experience?**

Lessons learned: A field vet perspective



Lessons learnt that don't show up formally in a "post-outbreak debrief"



What can we do, as industry personnel, differently to support the producer and each other?



The three most important things I have learnt thus far



Avian Influenza in Alberta

Start of outbreak:

12 cases in 9 days

Middle of outbreak:

17 cases in 31 days

June to August:

5 cases

September to Current:

16 cases



When a Producer Calls About Their Flock

- Dependency on the lab test for the positive result
 - We need this diagnosis to be as quick as possible
 - A waiting period of “what ifs” and “could it be this”
- Immediate access to mental health resources
- Introduction to the [Producer Portal](#)



The Producer Portal: <https://www.apifarmerupdates.com/>

What to expect as next steps if AI is suspected or confirmed:

The CFIA takes immediate disease control actions in response to all situations where domestic birds are suspected of being infected with NAI. While all disease response situations are different, the steps involved in an NAI response normally include the following:

- movement restrictions, e.g., quarantines
- sample submission
- investigation
- destruction and disposal
- cleaning and disinfection
- compensation
 - A reminder for producers to not conduct culling or euthanasia, unless directed by the CFIA. Any culling must be completed under a destruction order from CFIA to be eligible for CFIA compensation.
 - Animal Health Compensation - What to expect when an animal is ordered destroyed - [click here for more information.](#)

For a more detailed process please [click here.](#)

If you have specific questions, please contact your Board Office.

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Maps ○

Primary Control Zones ○

Permitting ○

Cleaning and Disinfection ○

Ventilation ○

Mental Health ○

Media ○

AgriStability Webinar ○

Compensation ○

Dead Bird Surveillance ○

Town Hall ○

Composting ○

When the Test Result was Received

- If positive: give them time and tell them when you will call them back
 - Speak positively of the CFIA
- If negative: don't celebrate too hard
 - Normalize AI testing

“Every single person at the CFIA I dealt with during that horrible time was kind and understanding. They made a terrifying situation a little more bearable and they were incredibly thoughtful”



The Producer Only Sees Doom Ahead

- Once they have processed the diagnosis:
 - How can we help what needs to be done right away?
 - Feed orders
 - Processor and industry notification
- Let them know they will have the support they need
- Maintaining confidentiality while also helping the industry to support them



How Did Some Producers Begin to Cope?



There is no
cookie
cutter
approach



The Position of an Industry Representative

- **New**: One industry representative per case:
 - In addition to the assigned CFIA case office
 - Producer can rely on this person to:
 - Help with SOPs
 - Find answers to their questions
 - Advocate for them if needed
 - Potentially be someone to open up to
 - A position of trust
- “You are my first priority going forward”



Navigating Producer Mental Health

- **New:** Open ended questions that focused on their energy levels
 - Instead of: Has it been a good day? Are you okay? Do you want to talk?
 - **Now:** How exhausted are you? How are you coping?
- **New:** Have them take notes when they can
 - Some producers benefit when they know they can help future producers
- **New:** There are some previously affected producers who have agreed to give their name and phone number for affected producer to reach out to them



What can Industry People do to Help?

Affected producers:

- **Call them, text them, check in on them**
 - Go for a beer or a coffee
- Meals
- Babysitting
- Errand running

The “forgotten ones”:

- Check in on the producer even after they place birds again
- Check in on the producers that don't have AI but are nervous



Consistent Producer Concerns/Questions

- What other barns on the site had Avian Influenza
- How did Avian Influenza get into their barns
- Cost and process of Cleaning and Disinfection
- The effect they have on the producers in their 3 and 10 km perimeters
- Losing control of what is done on their farm
- The unknown of cleaning audits
- Compensation



The Most Important Thing That I learnt

- **“This is not your fault”**
 - This needs to be said often and throughout the journey
- Speak and text openly about mental health



The Second Most Important Thing That I Learnt

- There is so much going on behind the scenes as soon as there is a suspect case!
 - The board offices are already working on getting documentation together
 - Ashley is already working on Permitting
 - Nancy and Carly are already working on Mapping
 - Maria and David are already working on communicating with the rest of the industry
 - The hatcheries and processors are already working on re-routing trucks
 - The APIEMT is already working on how to best support the producer and the CFIA



The Third Most Important Thing I learnt

- The unsung heroes
 - The emotional toll on people working with the producer is also enormous
 - Farmhands
 - People behind the scenes
 - Friends and family, other producers
 - APIEMT
 - Board members
 - Feed Representatives
 - Field representatives
 - Veterinarians and staff
- We need to take care of each other too



THANK YOU



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