

## Using Disinfectants

Cleaning and disinfecting is one of the most important parts of backyard biosecurity. But you need to make sure you do it correctly to inactivate disease.

- 1) Thoroughly clean and scrub items before applying disinfectant. Disinfectants cannot work on top of caked-on dirt and manure, so wash surfaces thoroughly before disinfecting them.
- 2) Apply disinfectant using brushes, sponges, or spray units. Allow adequate contact time (follow the manufacturer's instructions).
- 3) Dispose of used disinfectant according to local regulations.

## Examples of Disinfectants

For the best results, carefully follow the directions on the label of your disinfectant. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency registers pesticide products, including disinfectants. Approximately 100 disinfectant products are registered and intended for use against influenza A viruses on hard, non-porous surfaces. This list of disinfectants is available online at [www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/avian.htm](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/avian.htm).



## LOOK for Signs.

Know the warning signs of bird diseases such as AI (or "bird flu") and END, also known as virulent Newcastle disease.



## REPORT Sick Birds.

Don't wait. Early detection and reporting can make a difference. If your birds are sick or dying, contact your agricultural extension office/agent, local veterinarian, local animal health diagnostic laboratory, or the State veterinarian. Or, call USDA toll free at **1-866-536-7593**.



## PROTECT Your Birds.

Restrict traffic onto your property. Disinfect shoes, clothing, and equipment. Wash hands thoroughly. Keep other birds and people away from your birds.

You can also use:

- Household bleach: Mix three-fourths of a cup of bleach per gallon of water. Use it to disinfect tools, equipment, and hard surfaces.
- Waterless hand sanitizers (gel form or hand wipes): Be sure to work the cleaner all through your fingers and under your nails.
- Spray disinfectants: Be sure the label says the product kills bacteria and viruses. Use it for shoes and boots.

## Making an Easy Footbath

You will need:

- 1) A low plastic pan or bin, wide enough to fit an adult's foot and shallow enough to step into easily.
- 2) A plastic doormat (the "fake grass" mats work well).
- 3) A disinfectant that works well for most situations, such as Tek-trol or One Stroke Environ.
- 4) Water.

Mix the disinfectant with water per the label instructions. Put the doormat in the plastic pan. Add the disinfectant so the bottom of the mat is wet. Ask visitors to walk through the footbath, wiping their feet on the mat. The mat scrubs their shoes and applies the disinfectant. When the liquid starts to get dirty, empty it and put in new disinfectant.

## Why Be Concerned?

An outbreak of a bird disease such as avian influenza (AI) or exotic Newcastle disease (END) could not only harm or kill your birds, but also spread quickly and kill other nearby birds. In addition, an outbreak could seriously damage the domestic poultry industry and affect trade with other countries. The United States is the world's largest producer of poultry breeding stock, the world's largest producer and consumer of turkey meat, the second-largest egg producer, and the second-largest exporter of broiler meat.

With so much at stake, bird owners have a responsibility to protect against disease. **Remember, early detection and reporting is the most important step in eradicating a disease outbreak.** State and Federal veterinarians want to know if birds are sick or dying. There is no charge for a disease investigation, if one is needed.



<http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov>

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# Backyard Biosecurity Practices To Keep Your Birds Healthy



# Biosecurity Tips: 6 Ways To Protect Your Birds

Backyard biosecurity means doing everything you can to protect your birds from disease. As a bird owner, keeping your birds healthy is a top priority. Your birds can become sick or die from exposure to just a few unseen germs. In a single day, these germs can multiply and infect all of your birds. By practicing backyard biosecurity, you can help keep your birds healthy.

Backyard biosecurity is similar to what we do every day to protect ourselves from many human infections. We use personal hygiene to avoid catching or spreading germs. We wash our hands and our dishes, stay away from people sick with the flu and colds, and cover our mouths and noses when we sneeze. Good hygiene and other common-sense practices are also important to prevent disease in birds.

If you follow some basic tips and make backyard biosecurity part of your routine, you'll reduce the risk of disease entering your flock through contaminated soil, droppings, and debris. Practicing backyard biosecurity is an investment in the health of your birds.

**You  
are the best  
protection  
your birds have.**

## 1. Keep Your Distance.

Restrict access to your property and your birds. Other people and birds—including new birds you've just bought and wild birds—can carry diseases to your flock.

Allow only people who take care of your birds to come into contact with them. Your caretakers should not attend bird shows or other events and places where birds are present. If visitors want to see your birds, be sure they wash up first and clean their shoes. Better yet, keep clean boots or shoe covers for them to wear. You also can keep a clean footbath for them to walk through (see "Making an Easy Footbath" in this brochure for instructions). If visitors have birds of their own, do not let them enter your bird area or have access to your birds at all. Also, avoid visiting farms or other households with poultry.

Consider fencing off the area where your birds are to form a barrier between "clean" and "dirty" areas. The clean area is the immediate area completely surrounding your birds. The dirty (or "buffer") area is the immediate adjacent area—consider this area to be infected with germs, even if your birds appear healthy and disease-free.

Wild birds should not have contact with your flock because they can carry germs and diseases. If your birds are outdoors, try to keep them in a screened area.

## 2. Keep It Clean.

Germs can be picked up on shoes and clothing and moved from one place to another. To keep your birds "germ-free," have a pair of shoes and a set of clothes to wear only around your birds. Or, clean and disinfect your shoes (see "Using Disinfectants" for more detail) and launder your clothes before you check on or work with your birds.



Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before entering your bird area. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers with 60-percent alcohol content. Hand sanitizers without this level of alcohol will not be as effective.

Keep cages clean and change food and water daily. Also, clean and disinfect equipment that comes in contact with your birds or their droppings. Make sure to clean off all dirt and manure before disinfecting, or the disinfectant won't work. Properly dispose of dead birds by burial or incineration or take them to a landfill. Check on local ordinances for acceptable disposal methods.



## 3. Don't Haul Disease Home.

Car and truck tires, poultry cages, and equipment can all harbor germs. If you travel to a place where other birds are present, or even to the feed store, be sure to clean and disinfect these items before returning to your property.

If you take some of your birds to a fair or exhibition, keep those birds separated from the rest of your flock for at least 2 weeks after the event. New birds should be kept separate from your flock for at least 30 days. It is also best not to mix young and old birds or birds from different species or different sources. And, always buy birds from a reputable source.

## 4. Don't Borrow Disease From Your Neighbor.

Do not share birds, lawn and garden equipment, tools, or poultry supplies with your neighbors or other bird owners. If you do bring these items home, clean and disinfect them before they reach your property and remember to clean and disinfect borrowed items before returning them.

Never share items such as wood pallets or cardboard egg cartons because they are porous and cannot be adequately cleaned and disinfected.

## 5. Know the Warning Signs of Infectious Bird Diseases.

Early detection is important to prevent the spread of disease. Here's what to look for:

- Sudden increase in bird deaths in your flock
- Sneezing, gasping for air, coughing, and nasal discharge
- Watery and green diarrhea
- Lack of energy and poor appetite
- Drop in egg production or soft- or thin-shelled, misshapen eggs
- Swelling around the eyes, neck, and head
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, comb, and legs (avian influenza)
- Tremors, drooping wings, circling, twisting of the head and neck, or lack of movement (exotic Newcastle disease)

## 6. Report Sick Birds.

Don't wait. If your birds are sick or dying, contact your agricultural extension office/agent, local veterinarian, local animal health diagnostic laboratory, or the State veterinarian.

Or, call USDA toll free at **1-866-536-7593**, and we'll put you in touch with a local contact. There is no charge for a disease investigation, if one is needed.

