Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Biosecurity Assessments: Frequently Asked Questions

If a producer was previously affected by HPAI but is not currently, are they disqualified for the cost-sharing?

No. Producers that were previously affected by HPAI but are not currently affected are not disqualified from the cost-sharing.

If a farm has a Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessment and/or a Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment and is later affected by HPAI, will they still receive indemnity?

Yes. The Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessment and the Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment are intended to help prevent HPAI from affecting a location. However, if a farm is later affected by HPAI, indemnity still applies subject to other policies and regulations.

How many birds do I need to own to be eligible to participate in the Biosecurity Assessment Programs?

Flocks must have more than 500 birds to be eligible for biosecurity incentives reimbursement associated with the Biosecurity Assessment Programs.

I have under 500 birds in my flock and not eligible for the Biosecurity Assessment Programs. What resources are available to me?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Defend the Flock campaign has many biosecurity resources for backyard birds. Information on this campaign and its resources can be found at **www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock**.

How do multi-premises producers request assessments? Can they be handled with one request?

A producer with multiple premises can submit one request listing all the locations and all required information for each location. Assessments may not be completed for all of the premises on a request on the same day.

Are assessments or reimbursements available to facilities that have yet to be built or expansions to currently existing facilities?

A Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessment and/or Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment may be conducted at facilities expanding their current structures. Expansion of existing structures may qualify for cost-share. There are no reimbursements for new construction at a future facility.

Are the biosecurity assessments free?

Yes, the Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment and Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessment, both available to poultry producers not impacted by HPAI, are offered at no cost to producers.

Are the biosecurity assessments voluntary?

Yes. The Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment and the Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessment for commercial poultry producers not impacted by HPAI are voluntary.

If your commercial poultry operation has been confirmed positive for HPAI, you must pass an Infected Premises Restock Biosecurity Audit before restocking if you wish to be eligible for indemnity for the restocked poultry. If you are moving poultry into a designated buffer zone, you must pass a USDA Buffer Zone Placement Biosecurity Audit to be eligible for Federal indemnity for any birds that moved onto the premises.

Can I submit a request for both the Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment and the Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessment?

Yes.

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I've previously worked with the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Wildlife Services or Veterinary Services offices in my State. Can I contact them to request an assessment?

Producers must email **poultry.biosecurity@usda.gov** to request an assessment. This allows us to track the requests in the order they are received, ensure that all requests are recorded, and ensure participating producers are eligible for the cost-share. While we understand and appreciate that producers may have established relationships with specific APHIS employees or offices, not using the established process to request assessments may result in delays.

I submitted a request for an assessment. When will I hear back?

Once APHIS receives a request for an assessment, staff will review and assign someone as the point of contact for producers. Producers should hear from the point of contact in about a week. Currently APHIS is prioritizing the 12 highest egg producing States: Iowa, Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Texas, Georgia, Michigan, Arkansas, North Carolina, California, Alabama, and Missouri. Assessments of facilities located outside of those States will be conducted as staff are available.

Who should I contact if I have any questions after I have submitted my request for an assessment?

Once APHIS receives a request for an assessment, staff will review and assign someone as the point of contact for producers. Your point of contact will provide updates as needed.

Who will conduct the assessments?

USDA-trained staff will conduct the assessments.

Are producers required to make improvements identified by the assessments?

While there are no requirements to make improvements identified by the assessments, there is a cost-share of up to 75 percent of the cost to fix the highest-risk biosecurity concerns identified.

If you plan to restock poultry in a facility that had HPAI or is located in a buffer zone of a control area, improvements identified during the Biosecurity Compliance Audit must be completed if you wish to be eligible for indemnity for the restocked poultry.

Can I receive a reimbursement without an assessment?

No. In order to receive cost-share reimbursement, an assessment must be made to identify the items that need to be corrected. Reimbursement of items not identified during an assessment may occur and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. This ensures that resources are targeted toward enhancing biosecurity measures based on identified needs. Specific upgrades or modifications identified by the assessment would be eligible for cost-share support.

What if an assessment doesn't identify any biosecurity issues? Can a facility propose biosecurity improvements and still receive cost-share?

Yes. Producers may submit a proposal to USDA. USDA will review the proposal, verify an assessment was conducted, and a determine whether the proposal can be included in the cost-share.

How much money can I receive as part of the cost-share?

USDA will share up to 75 percent of the costs to fix the highest-risk biosecurity concerns identified by the assessments. Producers may be eligible for reimbursement support ranging from $2,500 to $25,000 per premises depending on the flock size (inventory). APHIS will communicate information about the maximum available for any given premises as producers request assessments.

How do I submit a reimbursement for cost-share? What do I need to provide?

Once an assessment is completed, please connect with the provided point of contact for information on reimbursement.

If I have a Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessment and receive cost-share reimbursement, can I request a Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment and receive additional reimbursement for items identified in that assessment?

Producers may request both the Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessment and the Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment, but the total amount for the cost-share for both assessments may not exceed the cap set for the size of the premises.

For example, if a facility with 500 birds is eligible for a total of $2,500 under the cost-share, and they received $1,500 for improvements identified during the Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessment, they would be eligible for up to $1,000 cost-share reimbursement for improvements identified under the Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment.

Are dairies included in this program?

This program is intended for poultry facilities; dairies are not included. However, there are dairy programs available to assist dairy farmers at **www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-livestock.**

Wildlife Biosecurity Assessments

How will the audit be conducted?

Assessments are conducted in-person and on farm. There are three major components to this program, however, not all premises will require or desire them all. Components may include an initial wildlife biosecurity assessment, wildlife abundance survey, and wildlife control.

What precautions will the assessment specialist take before entering the premises?

USDA takes biosecurity seriously and employees will follow all producer biosecurity precautions. All policies on the

use of personal protective equipment and cleaning and disinfection will be followed. In addition, assessors will work with producers to identify and comply with quarantine periods prior to visiting different farms. It is important to note that Wildlife Biosecurity Assessors will not be entering barns but will be working to identify breaches and/or biosecurity risks in the barn exterior and premises buildings and properties. Assessors will have a 72-hour waiting period before going to another facility.

What will specialists review and consider as part of the assessment?

Wildlife Biosecurity Assessments will look at exterior barn walls, perimeter buffer areas, all of the land owned by the farm or producer and associated with poultry production areas, and adjacent surrounding lands. Assessments will include the mapping and evaluating of wildlife attractants, identifying breaches in barn exteriors, and establishing wildlife monitoring and surveillance points.

Site location follow ups will occur approximately 30–60 days after the initial assessment and document any changes and upgrades that have been made. Any physical building repairs, construction projects, and mechanical exclusion efforts are the responsibility of the farm managers unless part of the cost-share agreement.

Up to 75 percent of costs to make improvements may be reimbursed to the producer through this overall program.

What should I expect after the assessment concludes?

Staff conducting these assessments will discuss options with producers that are specific to the premises. Potential scenarios include continued visits to the premises to conduct wildlife abundance surveys and wildlife management or in some cases it could merely be annual wildlife biosecurity assessments.

If a Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment was done last spring with the pilot program, does that count for the reimbursement program or do producers need to do another one?

To receive reimbursement from this new program, facilities need to have a Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment done after February 26, 2025.

Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessments

How will the assessment be conducted?

Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessments may be conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams. This assessment will review biosecurity plans and physical measures to identify and mitigate potential biosecurity gaps to prevent the introduction of HPAI.

What will specialists review and consider as part of the assessment?

These assessments review elements such as:

- Biosecurity documentation
- Maintenance of Perimeter Buffer Area/Line of Separation:
  - Signs warning unauthorized visitors not to enter perimeter buffer area and line of separation
  - Footwear and footbaths
  - Handwashing station
- Mortality monitoring procedures
- Wildlife mitigation:
  - Wild bird exclusion from barns
  - Rodent control
  - Vehicle, tools, and equipment sanitization

What should I expect after the assessment concludes?

After satisfactory completion of assessments, producers may submit a claim for reimbursement. The timeline for payment processing is variable.

Will a USDA employee conducting an assessment make recommendations on traffic patterns outside of the property?

The Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessments evaluate a standardized set of requirements and do not provide recommendations on how to mitigate gaps in meeting these requirements. Traffic patterns and things outside of the facility are not included in the assessment.

Biosecurity Compliance Audits

How does this audit differ from the Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment and the Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessment?

Biosecurity Compliance Audits are required after a facility or a nearby premises has been confirmed positive for HPAI and before restocking birds.

If your commercial poultry operation has been confirmed positive for HPAI or if you are moving poultry into a designated buffer zone, you must pass a USDA Buffer Zone Placement Biosecurity Audit to be eligible for federal indemnity for any birds that moved onto the premises if they later test positive for HPAI.

Contact the APHIS Area Veterinarian in Charge (**www.aphis.usda.gov/contact/animal-health**) or your case manager to request this audit.