



## Avian Influenza

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With effect from 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2019, India has been **declared free from Avian Influenza (H5N1)**, which has also been notified to the **World Organization for Animal Health (OIE)**.

- The declaration is a result of measures taken to control the recent outbreak of the disease at several places in Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha and hence there is **no presence of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Virus**.
- The status will last only till another outbreak is reported. India was **last declared free of the disease in 2017**.
- This declaration is important not just from the poultry industry standpoint, but also because humans can contact the disease from animals. Though the pathogen is not capable of sustained human-to-human transmission.

## About Avian Influenza

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- Avian influenza (AI) is a highly **contagious viral disease** affecting several species of **food-producing birds** (chickens, turkeys, quails, guinea fowl, etc.), as well as pet birds and wild birds.
  - Occasionally mammals, including humans, may contract avian influenza.
- Influenza A viruses are classified into subtypes based on two surface proteins, **Hemagglutinin (HA)** and **Neuraminidase (NA)**. For example, a virus that has an HA 7 protein and NA 9 protein is designated as subtype H7N9.
  - Avian influenza virus subtypes include A(H5N1), A(H7N9), and A(H9N2).
  - HPAI A(H5N1) virus occurs mainly in birds and is highly contagious among them.
  - **HPAI Asian H5N1 is especially deadly for poultry.**
- Avian Influenza outbreaks can lead to devastating consequences for the country, particularly the poultry industry.
  - Farmers might experience a high level of mortality in their flocks, with rates often around 50%.
- **Prevention: Strict biosecurity** measures and good **hygiene** are essential in protecting against disease outbreaks.

- **Eradication:** If the infection is detected in animals, a policy of **culling infected and contact animals** is normally used in an effort to rapidly contain, control and eradicate the disease.

### **World Organization for Animal Health**

- The OIE is an **intergovernmental organisation** responsible for improving animal health worldwide.
- It is recognised as a reference organisation by the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- In 2018, it had a total of 182 Member Countries.
- It is headquartered in **Paris, France**.

**Source: IE**