



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

To: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Poultry Producers
From: Greg Hostetter, Deputy Secretary for Animal Health and Food Safety *GH*
Subject: Preparation for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)
Date: August 26, 2015

Strains of highly pathogenic avian influenza virus continue to infect domestic poultry flocks in the United States, with immediate effects being felt in the Midwest. To date, more than 200 flocks have been impacted by the virus. Infected wild birds have been detected through surveillance in three of the country's four migratory bird flightpaths. One of the most recent confirmed detections of the virus occurred in Michigan. As we can see, the virus is still moving and could realistically enter the Atlantic flyway here in the eastern United States. While Pennsylvania has not been impacted by HPAI to date, based on current patterns, the virus could appear here between the fall of 2015 and the spring of 2016.

From lessons learned during the 1983-84 outbreak and from what we know of the current virus, sound biosecurity practices are critically important to minimizing Pennsylvanians' exposure to the disease and its economic impact. The cost of biosecurity measures, no matter how difficult and inconvenient, will pale in comparison to the actual cost of a disease outbreak occurring on your farm. Our department encourages you to prepare now through the following actions:

1. Limit Access

Restrict access to your property and to your poultry, and post a sign. Have one area where visitors can enter. Do not allow visitors near poultry unless absolutely necessary, and then ensure visitors have clean footwear (disposable boots work well) and clothes (supply these for them). Have an area where visitors can change clothes and provide shower-in, shower-out facilities if possible.

2. Keep It Clean

You, your staff and your family should follow biosecurity procedures for cleanliness. Wear clean clothes, scrub your shoes/boots with disinfectant and wash hands thoroughly. Keep equipment and vehicles clean and insist that all machinery and vehicles must be cleaned before entering your property. Maintain programs to control birds and rodents that can carry and spread diseases.

3. Don't Haul Disease Home

If you, your family or employees have been on other farms, at feed lots, petting zoos, auctions, or other places where there is livestock and poultry, clean and disinfect your truck or car tires and equipment before going home. If you are bringing in new animals, keep them separated from the rest of your flock for 30 days after the introduction. Always change clothes and wash your hands before returning to your animals.

4. Don't Borrow Disease from Your Neighbor

Do not share equipment, tools or other supplies with your neighbors or other livestock or poultry owners.

5. Look for Signs of Infectious Diseases

You should know what diseases are of concern for your flock and be on the lookout for unusual signs or behavior, severe illness and/or sudden deaths. Try to assess the health of your animals daily. Early detection is important to prevent the spread of disease.

6. Report Sick Animals

Don't wait. Report serious or unusual animal health problems to your veterinarian, local extension office, or state or federal animal health officials. You can also contact the department's 24-hour phone line at 717-772-2852.

7. Prevention

Remember your biosecurity plans are the first line of defense in protecting your flock. Restrict access to all non-sanitized vehicles including catch crews, slaughter transport, feed delivery and service personnel at your farm gate.

Restrict wild bird access to your commercial poultry production facility. Make sure your domestic poultry have no access to ponds, streams or other bodies of water frequented by wild water fowl. Be aware that wild and domestic water fowl may carry HPAI without showing the signs of disease.

We are all aware of the importance of rodent control in poultry facilities. However, in the face of HPAI, the effective application of this measure becomes a matter of survival for your flock. Rodents and insects are known to be carriers of infectious virus from wild bird residue into poultry barns.

Biosecurity measures will only be effective if they are consistently enforced and practiced. **Eligibility for United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) indemnity may be based on this consistent application.** Keep a written record of all biosecurity measures taken by using visitor and sanitation logs, which demonstrate that all appropriate biosecurity measures were maintained.

A written biosecurity plan that is not fully executed is of little value. Biosecurity practices should be audited by designated verifiers who record observations of the practices being followed.

8. Flock Plan

Anticipate the actions to be taken on your farm should HPAI infection be confirmed. In addition to biosecurity Standard Operating Procedures, every farm needs an HPAI flock plan. A copy of the USDA generic flock plan is available on the department's website, which can be found on the form attached to this memo entitled, "Filling Out Your Flock Plan: Important Questions to Answer." The flock plan will help you address specifics of depopulation, disposal and cleaning and disinfection methods. Since variables including weather and other environmental conditions at the time infection is confirmed may affect the plan, alternative procedures should be considered. Therefore, it is impossible to pre-approve a flock plan. The plan is an agreement entered into by the state, USDA and flock owner at the time of HPAI confirmation.

The department has taken a series of measures to prepare for the appearance of HPAI in the eastern United States. A commonwealth-wide HPAI task force, which includes industry, university staff and faculty, federal and state animal health regulators and other department officials, has been convened to address all technical areas that would come into play in the event of an outbreak. This task force supports the department's incident command structure in disease response preparation. Regulatory changes have already been made to protect Pennsylvania's poultry industry from accidental introduction of HPAI virus through movement of higher risk poultry and poultry products.

The department has issued two quarantine orders to safeguard the state against HPAI. The first, published June 20, is an interstate quarantine order that requires robust testing requirements for poultry entering the East Coast live bird markets from HPAI-affected states. This quarantine order also addresses similar flock testing requirements for movement of shell eggs from HPAI-affected states to breaking facilities in Pennsylvania, as well as the sanitation of shell egg containers used in product transport.

The second order, published August 22, is an interstate and general quarantine order to impose strict standards that all vehicles, conveyances, containers and materials that transport poultry and related products be completely cleaned and disinfected. There must be no visible buildups of manure and feathers before loading. Additionally, written documentation of cleaning and disinfection must be maintained.

Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding has briefed Governor Tom Wolf regularly on the situation and the department's response planning. He has also met with cabinet members to discuss their agencies' respective roles during an emergency disease response situation. We have met with legislators and local officials and will continue to meet with them as required.

Additional surveillance measures at poultry auctions have already been instituted. Heightened surveillance of dead poultry and poultry with evidence of avian influenza symptoms is currently underway as a precautionary measure. Pennsylvania's aggressive low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) flock surveillance program continues to provide maximum opportunity for early detection of avian influenza in all sectors of the state's poultry industry.

The department continues to monitor the national HPAI situation closely and is prepared to respond to this very significant threat to our multi-billion dollar industry. We ask your careful consideration of the information provided in this letter and your future collaboration in our work to preserve and protect Pennsylvania's poultry industry. Please continue to partner with us in a unified effort to keep our poultry flocks healthy and productive.

Thank you.

Attachment

cc: HPAI Task Force
Animal Health Commission

