

TENNESSEE - Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is a serious poultry disease that is extremely deadly to chickens and turkeys, causing significant losses. Avian influenza is carried by migrating waterfowl, which serve as natural hosts for the virus. These birds shed virus, often showing no signs of illness. It can be transmitted to domestic poultry through direct contact or by human contact through contaminated clothing, feed, equipment or vehicles. The disease can spread very quickly so early detection and response is critical.

Background:

The outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5 in spring 2015 was the worst animal disease incident in U.S. history. More than 200 premises were affected in 15 States, with more than 48 million birds depopulated. The Tennessee Department of Agriculture, along with other state, federal and industry partners, is planning and preparing for the possibility that the disease will re-emerge.

Planning and Preparation:

TDA and other state and federal partners routinely monitor for the disease through surveillance and testing of wild birds as well as domestic flocks in cooperation with industry. An HPAI task force representing state, federal and industry partners has been formed and regularly meets under the guidance of the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency. An initial State Response and Containment Plan, which covers a wide range of responses and protocols for quarantine, testing, disposal, cleaning and disinfection and monitoring, has been developed. State and federal resources have been identified or procured, and staff assignments have been made for incident direction and control. Testing and laboratory readiness has been enhanced. TDA has worked with industry to identify poultry farms across the state and to ensure that biosecurity measures and response plans are in place. Surveillance, planning, training and outreach continue.

Response:

Once the disease is suspected in a backyard or commercial poultry flock, animal health officials will obtain samples for testing. If confirmed positive for HPAI, a quarantine restricting the movement of birds will be put in place for the affected premises and other domesticated poultry flocks in the area. State and federal animal health officials will work with the farm operator to see that infected birds are depopulated and disposed of as quickly as possible to prevent further spread. In-house composting is the preferred method of disposal for commercial flocks. This process, followed by cleaning and disinfection, can take several weeks to complete. Extensive surveillance and testing will be conducted throughout the quarantine area during this time.

Poultry Owners:

Poultry owners should be on the lookout for signs of the disease and report sick or dying birds immediately to the State Veterinarian's Office at 615-837-5120, or call USDA toll-free at 1-866-536-7593. Signs of illness included a sudden increase in bird deaths; 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; ruffled feathers, listlessness, lethargy.

Biosecurity:

Owners of commercial and backyard flocks should practice and strengthen biosecurity. That simply means using common sense practices to protect your birds from all types of disease agents and to prevent disease causing germs from entering your premises. Biosecurity basics include:

- Allowing only essential personnel to access your property and your birds. Disinfect any vehicles that enter your farm.
- Don't lend or borrow equipment from other farms. Bring only cleaned and disinfected items into your bird area.
- Avoid contact with other poultry. If you cannot avoid contact, change clothes and shoes before working with your own birds.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before entering your bird area.
- Use footbaths when entering or leaving your bird housing (change disinfectant frequently)—or wear disposable boot covers.
- Keep poultry separate from wild birds. Don't let them share water sources or have access to common areas frequented by wild birds.
- Eliminate standing water on your farm and clean up feed spills to avoid attracting wild birds.

Resources:

TDA Avian Influenza:

www.TN.gov/agriculture

USDA Animal Disease Information:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth>

USDA Biosecurity for the Birds:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/birdbiosecurity/biosecurity/basicspoultry.htm.

Contacts:

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