AVIAN INFLUENZA UPDATE

High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has had a devastating effect on the Poultry Industry. The outbreak this spring affected 232 poultry premises in the United States of which 211 commercial operations and 21 backyard flocks were involved. The strain of greatest concern was H5N2 which was highly pathogenic, killing chickens and turkeys in large numbers and spreading rapidly through a facility.

The impact of the disease will be felt for a long time due to devastating effects on the layer industry (42.1 million hens) and the turkey industry (7.5 million turkeys). Consumer prices are up and exports have declined. The negative economic impact of this outbreak includes the loss of income for producers and their employees, the cost of depopulating farms, the cost of surveillance programs, and the cost for cleaning and disinfecting premises. Recovery for the layer industry will be slow due to the time it takes to physically clean and disinfect a large facility, as well as the time it takes to raise chicks to laying age. In addition, there are limited facilities suitable for raising pullets. The turkey industry lost breeder birds that have tightened the hatching egg supply. As of August 19th only 102 of the 211 commercial operations are eligible to restock and only 8 of the 21 backyard flocks were released.

What has been learned from this terrible situation?

Migratory Birds

» Migratory birds played a role in the spread of this disease. The HPAI outbreak occurred in the Pacific, Central, and Mississippi flyways. The migratory flight pattern of the waterfowl stalled out in the Midwest for an unusually long time.

» Waterfowl can shed large quantities of virus into the environment. Numerous detections of the HPAI virus were found in Lesser Snow Geese, but other waterfowl species were also involved.

Biosecurity

» Traffic between operations was greater than previously thought.

» Shared equipment and vehicles between operations were greater than expected. There was also greater incidences of poor cleaning and disinfection of equipment between operations.

» Biosecurity plans were not updated or emphasized to all employees on a regular basis.

» Forty-two percent of the infected houses were not bird proof for birds such as sparrows and starlings.

Wind Aided Spread of Virus

» The Midwest experienced unusually sustained winds of high velocity. Preliminary epidemiology studies indicated that if an area had sustained wind for 2 days, a peak in HPAI outbreaks would occur within a week.

» Farms downwind from an infected premise were 5-6 times more likely to become infected.

Many experts have warned that as the migratory birds return south this fall there may be a spike in HPAI outbreaks through all four flyways in North America. What should you be doing now to help control this poultry disease?


2. Bird proof your poultry houses.

3. Discourage migratory birds from residing on farm ponds. Remove feed sources and create disturbances through non-lethal means.

4. Examine your farm and select a location to set up a truck washing station in case there is an outbreak in your area. The site should
preferably be away from the poultry houses and residences.

5. Examine your farm for potential burial sites for large quantities of birds. If you have any questions about the suitability of a potential site ask the NRCS for assistance.

6. Many poultry producers and employees are hunters. As you venture into the woods and fields, you need to follow strict biosecurity measures when returning to the farm. Clean vehicles, clothing, and footwear thoroughly.

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