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**AVIAN INFLUENZA: REDUCING THE RISKS OF INTRODUCTION TO YOUR FLOCK**

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As of March 12, 1993, the facts concerning evidence of avian influenza (AI) in Pennsylvania are as follows:

1. We are *not* experiencing an outbreak of clinical AI in Pennsylvania. This means that we currently do *not* have birds that are sick and dying from AI infection.

2. Live AI virus of the H5 subtype has been isolated from 2 premises — one of which is a Philadelphia live bird market (now closed) and the other is a very recent isolation from a poultry premise in eastern Pennsylvania (now quarantined). Isolation of live virus means that virus may be actively circulating, with potential for spread to other birds and premises.

3. Birds with antibody to AI virus of the H5 subtype have been limited to less than 10 premises which include the Philadelphia live market. The presence of antibody is indirect evidence that virus was present in the bird for a period of time, probably within the last several months. It does *not* mean that the bird is now actively infected and a potential spreader of disease. However, the environments of birds that have been infected with virus may still contain some active virus particles.

These premises have been further monitored by virus isolation attempts.

4. All flocks that are antibody positive, all premises that are virus isolation positive, and all Pennsylvania live bird markets are under quarantine at this time.

5. Birds from nonquarantined premises in Pennsylvania may be moved to recognized slaughter establishments.

6. Outside of Pennsylvania, AI virus has been isolated in several New York and New Jersey live bird markets. This is very good evidence that H5 AI virus is circulating in the live bird marketing system in the Mid-Atlantic region.

The importance of this information is that we need to recognize that we are in a *potentially* dangerous situation with regard to our commercial poultry flocks. Fortunately, the H5 virus that was isolated at the Philadelphia live market has *not* been found to be a highly lethal strain, but we know AI viruses can change character quickly. A fairly harmless type can become a highly dangerous type if allowed to circulate in our bird populations unchecked. Therefore, since most of our flocks, especially our larger commercial enterprises, are currently free of AI, we need to take strict precautions to keep it that way.

How can we reduce the risk of bringing AI into our poultry flocks? The answer can be summed up in one very important word — **BIOSECURITY!** Biosecurity in the current sense means keeping our flocks away from the virus, and the virus away from our

flocks.

It may be helpful to think of biosecurity, or disease prevention measures, as very similar to crime prevention measures taken to lessen the risk of a prowler breaking into your home. What might happen if prevention measures are *not* taken? Let's think of the situation in terms of the following analogies:

- Crime deterring measures = Biosecurity
- Your home = Your poultry flock
- Evidence of break-in = Clinical disease signs (may not be present)
- Prowler = Virus
- Fingerprints = Antibody
- Police = Animal health professionals (company, regulatory, university)
- Crime lab = Diagnostic laboratory
- Prison = Quarantine
- Police watch = Surveillance or monitoring program
- Neighborhood watch = Industry vigilance

This is the situation: You have been lax about certain safety precautions such as keeping your home well-lit, trimming the front shrubbery, and putting good locks on doors and windows and remembering to use them. You come home at night after being away all day. You enter the house and notice a few things just aren't right — perhaps some belongings are out of place, or you see a muddy footprint that you know wasn't there when you left. You might suspect that a prowler has broken in. What you do not know at this point are the following: 1) Is the intruder still in the house? 2) Who is he? 3) How dangerous is he? For these reasons, you would be advised to leave, get to a phone, and call the police. You would not be advised to go in to look for the

intruder yourself or re-arrange any of the evidence. Nor should you call your neighbor over to check out the house with you, because that would put you *both* at risk.

When the police come, they can look for the prowler, and if they find him (virus isolation), determine how dangerous he is. They can also examine the evidence he left behind. Even if the intruder is no longer on the premise, he has most likely left some fingerprints (antibody) behind that the crime lab can analyze and specifically link to his identity. Either way, the criminal, if still in the area, may be caught and locked up in prison (quarantine) so he won't visit anyone else. With a good policeman walking the beat (surveillance program) and an ongoing neighborhood watch (industry vigilance), this type of event should be less likely to occur. If it does occur, it would be less likely to become a widespread problem.

Your responsibility as a poultry producer is to keep the virus from "breaking in" to your flock. Common sense biosecurity measures should be practiced. These include the following:

- 1) Control the movement of people, poultry and equipment to prevent farm to farm contact. Don't allow unnecessary traffic of any of these on your premise.
- 2) Pay strict attention to sanitation of anything or anybody that is on or comes on to your farm. You and any necessary visitors should sanitize boots and wear clean protective clothing around your birds. Sanitize all vehicles, tires, and equipment. When possible, prac-

tice all in-all out management, and clean and disinfect all poultry houses before bringing in new birds.

3) Keep out wild or migratory birds and avoid any contact with them.

4) Don't deal directly or indirectly with live bird markets.

5) Promptly investigate any signs of disease in your flock, and stop bird movement until AI has been eliminated as a possible cause.

Another important part of biosecurity is *monitoring* for disease or disease-causing agents. We need to keep looking for virus and antibody to the virus in order to know that our flocks are remaining free of AI.

Participation in the AI Surveillance Program currently in place in our state is crucial. The submission of blood or dead carcasses from market birds and blood, dead carcasses or eggs from breeders and layers to the diagnostic laboratories for antibody testing is the basis of the program. Many companies are participating in the program, but all poultry producers need to submit samples if we are to get good information that is representative of our Pennsylvania poultry populations.

It is important to remember that we are now in a position to *prevent* introduction of virus into our poultry flocks. To do this, we must cooperate with all segments of the poultry industry in practicing biosecurity. The bottom line is that disease, like crime, doesn't pay, but disease *prevention* does!

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