

# Tighten Biosecurity Against Avian Influenza

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — Avian Influenza (AI) remains a constant threat to poultry producers because the virus can still be found periodically in various areas where poultry are concentrated.

There are measures every producer should take to minimize the possibility of infecting his flock with the virus.

The amount of AI virus required to cover the face of a dime is

enough to infect one million birds. The disease is found periodically in live bird and auction markets, in wild waterfowl that land in fields or ponds, in occasional backyard, hobby or show flocks, in domestic waterfowl and, on occasion, in a commercial flock.

According to a news release, There are various strains, or serotypes, of the AI virus, and although the H5 and H7 types are the most feared, though any of the

types have the potential to become highly disease-producing, if they pass through a series of flocks.

Nationally, AI was reported from pheasants and quail (they were killed), and imported pet birds (they were quarantined), and at live bird markets in New York and New Jersey.

In Pennsylvania, an active surveillance program has been in place ever since the 1983-84 outbreak, when more than 16 million

chickens were killed to stop the disease. In Pennsylvania, more than 80,000 samples are tested for AI each year.

There are a number of considerations that can help protect an individual flock, and ultimately the industry.

Producers should not allow poultry dealers who travel from farm to farm, or from auction to auction markets to visit a flock.

Unnecessary visitors should be kept out of the flock and those who must visit should be required to wear clean coveralls and protective footwear.

Insist that any hauling crates or equipment brought to the farm are clean and sanitized.

Depopulate an entire flock at one time, avoid the practice of "topping off," which means to remove only part of a flock. This practice allows a small amount of virus to incubate and cause disease in the remaining birds.

Wild birds and waterfowl can carry the disease. They also can migrate thousands of miles during the fall, and in the spring, carrying

disease. Be careful not to track virus in from the fields into the poultry house. It can be carried on footwear and clothing.

Do not let waterfowl hunters to enter you flock without clean coveralls and protective footwear.

Likewise, domestic waterfowl can also be frequent carriers of AI viruses. Avoid contact of domestic waterfowl with chicken or turkey flocks and follow sanitary procedures after walking through an area visited by domestic waterfowl or where they congregate.

The ratites, which includes the ostriches, rheas, and emus, may also be infected with AI viruses and they should be considered a potential risk to a poultry flock.

Dead birds should be disposed of in a manner that does not attract domestic or wild predators or scavengers.

If a producer finds that his flock is sick, that producer should avoid visiting other flocks, unless extreme precautions are taken.

If a flock shows respiratory signs of illness, an unexplained

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