

## Producers: Be Aware Of Avian Influenza Alert

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) – Recent developments regarding the H7 N2 avian influenza (A.I.) virus which is present in many of the New York and New Jersey live-bird markets and which was responsible for the 1997-1998 outbreak in Pennsylvania make it urgent that A.I. biosecurity procedures be reviewed and, if necessary, improved.

Up until recently, repeated testing of virus samples (isolates) of H7 N2 by USDA-ARS research workers had shown the virus to have the internal structure (amino acid configuration, etc.) that made it unlikely to become highly pathogenic (to produce severe disease)

Recently some of the H7 N2 isolates have shown internal changes that could signal an increasing trend toward the risk of becoming highly pathogenic. If this occurred, the current H7 N2 virus could then produce the kind of severe disease seen in the 1983-84 H5 N2 outbreak where more than 16 million birds were depopulated and many more died before the outbreak was stopped.

Because this H7 N2 virus is found regularly in some of the live bird markets, it is especially important that any direct or indirect contact with live bird markets be reviewed. Such contacts could include dealers in the live bird markets, flocks supplying birds for the markets, and trucks and equipment that may be used to transport birds to or from the markets. Any such contacts should be conducted only under the highest level of bio-

curity.

There are many other procedures which the industry should be practicing on a regular basis

### Keeping Avian Influenza Out

- If a poultry dealer must come to your farm, insist that his crates and trucks are clean. Never allow crates to be put in your house, particularly if any birds are to remain on the farm. The avian influenza virus is consistently found in the New York and New Jersey live bird markets

- Keep the poultry house locked. Allow only essential personnel into your poultry house. They should wear clean or disposable coveralls, head cover and plastic boots or boots which can be washed and disinfected. Have a disinfectant footbath that is

changed daily at the outside entries to the poultry house and egg room.

- Both domestic and wild waterfowl, including gulls, can be carriers of A.I. virus. Don't carry feces from these birds on your shoes or equipment into your poultry house.

- Do not spread manure from any flock that has experienced suspicious illness and mortality within at least three weeks after illness or unless manure is first composted and covered for several weeks.

- Dispose of dead birds safely – by incineration, burial, composting or rendering. Never pile birds outside a building or dispose of in fields.

- Do not use equipment from another farm on your farm unless it was cleaned and disinfected.

- Egg pickup and feed delivery people should wear protective foot covering – either disposable plastic boots that are left on the farm to discard or rubber boots that are disinfected.

- Insist that supplies brought to your farm are either new (if fiber flats) or are clean, washed, and disinfected (plastic flats, carts, shelves or dividers).

- Do not attend auctions where poultry are sold.

- Wild birds (starlings, etc.) could spread the A.I. virus. Keep birds screened out of your houses and work with pest control professionals to try and reduce or eliminate these birds on your premises.

- Growers should not wear poultry

house clothing and footwear away from the farm.

- Restrict the movement of all vehicles (automobiles and trucks) entering and leaving your farm. Disinfect the tires, undercarriage (when possible), and floor of vehicles.

- Participate in the statewide avian influenza monitoring program. This includes submitting at least 120 and preferably 24-30 eggs (blood eggs are preferable) per month from all laying flocks and collecting 10 bloods at slaughter from meat bird flocks.

- Report any increased illness or mortality to your company or to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, (717) 783-8300.




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