



AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS

Animal Health Section

Dr. Kristin Haas, State Veterinarian

http://agriculture.vermont.gov/animal_health

www.Agriculture.Vermont.Gov 116 State Street • Montpelier, Vermont 05620-2901 • (802) 828-2421 • (802) 828-5983 FAX

Poultry Producer, Owner, Enthusiast, or Interested Citizen:

As you may be aware, a disease called the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) affected a number of farms in the mid-West last year. While there have been no human cases of HPAI virus detected in the United States or internationally, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers the risk to people from HPAI infection to be low, domestic poultry are highly susceptible to HPAI H5 virus, which can spread rapidly from bird to bird and typically results in high mortality rates. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets is encouraging poultry owners, producers and enthusiasts to prepare for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), which is expected to impact the East Coast in the future.

The disease can potentially be spread to domestic poultry by infected wild birds, including waterfowl, shorebirds and passerines, either through direct contact or contact with droppings, during migration periods. Once a domestic flock is infected, direct or indirect contact with that flock can lead to further infection, if proper precautions are not observed. Therefore, the entire Northeast, including Vermont, is preparing for the possibility that an outbreak of HPAI could affect our region. While the HPAI outbreak has not yet been identified in Vermont, poultry producers and poultry owners should be familiar with the disease, how it is spread, and preparedness efforts that they can engage in now.

All poultry owners, whether they are backyard hobbyists or commercial producers, should evaluate their farms for risk factors that could contribute to avian influenza occurring on their farms. *Potential* risk factors include:

- Poultry housed outside.
- Ponds or other waterfowl attractants on the farm.
- Piles of debris located close to poultry areas.
- Introduction of poultry from other farms without a quarantine period.
- Lack of personal protective equipment such as dedicated coveralls and boots.
- Sharing of equipment between farms.
- Movement of vehicles between farms

Poultry owners should **fill out and return to VAAFM** the Producer Preparedness: Biosecurity Audit Form which details information that will be required for farms to move poultry and livestock, equipment, and production related conveyances on and off of the property in the event of an HPAI outbreak. The form can be accessed through the following link and returned to VAAFM via email, mail, or fax:





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- http://agriculture.vermont.gov/animal_health
- Email: agr.animalhealth@vermont.gov
- Mail: VAAFM Animal Health Section, 116 State Street, Montpelier VT 05620
- Fax: (802) 828 5983

All poultry owners, regardless of size and business structure, should engage in the following disease preparedness measures:

- **Obtain a federal premises identification number by calling the State Veterinarian's Office at (802) 828-2421. A unique farm identifier will aid regulatory officials in providing information to owners pre-outbreak and assisting owners with disease control and business continuity during a disease response.**
- **Complete the Producer Preparedness: Biosecurity Audit Form and return to VAAFM – when there is an outbreak, this information will be needed in order for farms in a disease control area to be able to continue movement on and off their farm.**
 - This form is accessible on the VAAFM website: http://agriculture.vermont.gov/animal_health
- Keep poultry away from wild birds, particularly waterfowl and shorebirds, and remove wild bird attractants from poultry housing areas.
- If poultry are housed indoors, don't let wild birds (or their fecal material) into barns.
- Clean and disinfect all equipment prior to entry into a barn or poultry housing area.
- Use barn-specific boots and coveralls and consider using boot baths/washes.
- Do not bring disease home with you - if you exhibit your poultry at fairs or swaps, do not share cages or equipment with other poultry owners.
- Familiarize yourself with signs of illness in your birds and call the State Veterinarian's Office if you see nasal discharge, difficulty breathing, lethargy, discolored wattles or combs, a drop in egg production, or sudden death.

Commercial poultry producers should take additional proactive steps to increase the likelihood of continued business profitability in the event of a disease outbreak, such as:

- Evaluating your farm's carcass disposal options and contacting the Agency of Natural Resources Department of Environmental Conservation Waste Management and Prevention Division for a site evaluation and technical assistance: (802)828-1138.
- Ensuring easy access to complete farm records that include live poultry and poultry product movement on and off the property and other non-poultry related routine farm traffic such as veterinary visits, feed deliveries, or service technicians.
- Implement and consistently utilize a visitor's log.
- Evaluate and plan for product storage if in the event of an outbreak your farm is not able to move product.
- Initiate conversations with your markets to determine if they will accept your product during an outbreak.



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- If you are an organic farm, review with your certifying organization the possibility of raising your birds indoors, should such measures become necessary.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers the risk to people from these HPAI H5 infections to be low. No human cases from these HPAI H5 viruses have been detected in the United States or internationally. Influenza in poultry does not constitute a food safety risk.

All bird owners, whether commercial producers or backyard enthusiasts, are encouraged to practice good biosecurity, prevent contact between their birds and wild birds, and report sick birds or unusual bird deaths to State/Federal officials, either through the Vermont Agency of Agriculture at (802)828-2421 or through USDA's toll-free number at 1-866-536-7593.

