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**STATE VETERINARIAN RECOMMENDS PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES FOLLOWING AVIAN INFLUENZA DETECTION IN MISSISSIPPI MIGRATORY BIRD FLYWAY**

*No cases detected in Ohio, CDC says threat to humans is low*

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio – (March 13, 2015) Following recent announcements confirming the presence of highly pathogenic H5N2 avian influenza (HPAI H5) in commercial turkey flocks in the Mississippi migratory bird flyway, State Veterinarian Dr. Tony Forshey is urging Ohio poultry owners to take extra precautions and to monitor their birds for signs of illness. The recommendations are given out of an abundance of caution as there have been no detections in Ohio and no human infections are associated with these viruses. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers the risk to people from these HPAI H5 infections to be low.

“We have not had any suspect cases in Ohio, but because we are also located within the Mississippi flyway, we want poultry owners to be aware and to take proper precautions. Whether you have a fair project, a backyard flock, or are a commercial producer, you should practice good biosecurity measures and monitor the health of your birds closely, especially if they could come into contact with wild birds or are traveling this spring to poultry shows,” said Dr. Forshey.

The United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) first confirmed HPAI H5 in the Pacific migratory bird flyway, in wild birds and poultry flocks in Washington, Oregon and Idaho, beginning in late 2014. The recent announcements of positives in commercial turkey flocks in Arkansas, Minnesota and Missouri, all located within the Mississippi flyway, indicate that migratory birds may be carrying the virus east of the Mississippi River. Ohio is located within the Mississippi flyway.

“It is important to remember there have been no human infections associated with these viruses. It is perfectly safe to keep eating poultry and eggs. Cooking poultry, including game birds, to the proper temperature and preventing cross contamination between raw and cooked food is always recommended to protect against viruses and bacteria,” said Dr. Forshey.

**Biosecurity recommendations for poultry owners**

All bird owners, whether commercial producers or backyard enthusiasts, should continue to practice good biosecurity, prevent contact between their birds and wild birds, and report sick birds or unusual bird deaths to their veterinarian immediately.



Good biosecurity practices for poultry owners include the following:

- **Monitor flocks** for unusual signs of illness such as “snicking” (sneezing,) a 1 percent or more decrease in egg production, or an increase in mortality. Other signs to look for are wheezing, lethargy, and depression.
- **Practice personal biosecurity** and avoid contact with sick/dead poultry or wildlife. If contact occurs, wash your hands with soap and water and change clothing before having any contact with healthy domestic poultry and birds.
- **Keep unauthorized visitors from having contact** with poultry, a good practice whether there is a disease threat or not. Authorized persons should be required to wear protective clothing and shoes before entering a commercial poultry house.
- **Avoid contact between your birds and wild birds** whenever possible due to the likely migratory nature of HPAI H5. These virus strains can travel in wild birds without them appearing sick.
- **Clean and disinfect** farm vehicles or equipment before moving them on and off your property.

If traveling with birds to a poultry show this spring, Dr. Forshey recommends taking extra care to keep transport and housing areas clean, minimize opportunities for birds to co-mingle and quarantine birds for at least 21 days before reintroducing them to a flock.

Sick birds or unusual bird deaths should also be immediately reported to the Ohio Department of Agriculture’s Division of Animal Health at 1-614-728-6220 or through USDA APHIS’s toll-free number at 1-866-536-7593. Additional information on biosecurity from USDA APHIS for backyard flocks can be found at <http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov> or by visiting [www.ohioagriculture.gov](http://www.ohioagriculture.gov).

The Ohio Department of Agriculture works closely with the state’s poultry producers and USDA APHIS to closely monitor the health of poultry in the state. Detailed plans and protocols are in place to allow for a quick and coordinated response in the event of an avian influenza detection in Ohio.

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