



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

ODA Office of Communication, (614) 752-9817, [Erica.Hawkins@agri.ohio.gov](mailto:Erica.Hawkins@agri.ohio.gov)

## **ANIMAL HEALTH ALERT: AVIAN INFLUENZA DETECTED IN WILD BIRDS IN ALASKA**

*Poultry owners should follow recommended biosecurity practices*

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (Aug. 29, 2016) – State Veterinarian Dr. Tony Forshey is encouraging poultry owners to ensure they are following recommended biosecurity practices after the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced Friday that a highly contagious strain of avian influenza was detected in wild birds in Alaska. No other recent cases have been identified in the country.

"While this finding is not cause for any immediate concern, it is a good reminder for poultry owners to develop and employ a strong biosecurity program on their farm, regardless of their size or production model," said Dr. Forshey. "This will help them protect their flocks from this influenza as well as other diseases that can affect their birds."

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 this influenza. 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.

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.

- 30 -

Editors Note: for more information on the recent USDA announcement, please visit this [stakeholder announcement](#).

