REPORT ON AVIAN INFLUENZA ON EGG FARMS – WEEK OF MAY 11, 2015

Please share this report with customers, elected officials, community leaders and others interested in the impacts of Avian Influenza (AI) in the egg layer industry.

RECENT UPDATES

- The U.S. is experiencing a very serious outbreak of highly pathogenic Avian Influenza (AI). A few outbreaks occurred on the west coast this past winter in wild, backyard and commercial poultry. In late winter and spring 2015, 10 Midwestern states and Ontario, Canada, confirmed outbreaks in flocks.
- As of May 14, more than 33 million total birds have been affected in 158 AI-positive flocks.
- Seventeen commercial egg farms have tested positive for AI, totaling more than 26 million laying hens in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin. This calculates to about eight percent of all layers in the U.S. and an estimated 20% of the layers dedicated for the egg products business.
- Because AI findings on egg and poultry farms are announced shortly after positive test confirmations, please consider USDA APHIS* website as the most current source.

INDUSTRY RESPONSE

- The egg industry is working closely with state and federal officials on key AI response issues, including euthanasia of flocks, management of mortality on farms, indemnity provisions that ensure affected farms can recover, and research into possible AI vaccines.
- It is not yet known exactly how the virus is being transmitted; migratory waterfowl are believed to be a primary vector. There is also evidence of some lateral transmission from farm-to-farm, and the Federal Government is currently undertaking a detailed epidemiological assessment to better understand the spread of the virus.
- Egg producers have worked tirelessly to ensure that on-farm biosecurity includes comprehensive measures that mitigate vector transmission of the virus into the hen house.
- While hopeful that hotter, drier summer weather will mitigate the outbreak, the egg community and animal health officials are working to limit further spread in the fall migratory season.

KEY POINTS FOR THE PUBLIC TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT AVIAN INFLUENZA

- Maintaining the health and well-being of hens and producing safe, healthy eggs is of utmost importance to U.S. egg farmers.
- Egg farmers are deeply concerned about AI, which is taking a terrible financial and emotional toll on the farm community, and disease prevention is a top priority.
- The strains of AI that have been found in the U.S. are not a public health concern and have not affected any humans to date, as confirmed by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Avian influenza cannot be transmitted through safely handled and properly cooked eggs. Egg Safety Center has a complete Q&A on safe handling and preparation.
- U.S. egg farmers have implemented extensive biosecurity measures and taken every precaution to protect their flocks, including restricting farm access, preventing hens from exposure to wild and migratory birds, increasing veterinary monitoring of flocks and using protective gear at all times.
- The U.S. egg industry is collaborating with federal and state officials and scientific experts, in AI surveillance and response, as well as identifying workable, long-term biosecurity and disease prevention measures to limit the spread of AI now and in the future.

* U.S. Department of Agriculture-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service