



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 18, 2022

Secretary of Agriculture Provides Update on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

No Public Health Risk for Pennsylvanians

Harrisburg, PA – On Saturday, April 16, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture confirmed the state's first positive case of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in domestic poultry, in a flock of commercial layer chickens on a Lancaster County poultry farm. A state and federal interagency task force is prepared and initiating a response plan.

While there is no risk to the public, and poultry and eggs are safe to eat if cooked properly, HPAI is highly infectious and can be fatal to domestic birds (chickens, ducks, geese, quail, pheasants, guinea fowl and turkeys).

According to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), avian influenza detections do not present an immediate public health concern. No human cases of avian influenza viruses have been detected in the United States.

The positive samples were taken from a flock in East Donegal Township, Lancaster County, and tested at the Pennsylvania Veterinary Laboratory. The finding was confirmed by the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa. The department has quarantined the farm and all commercial poultry facilities within a 10-kilometer radius of the infected flock.

“Protecting Pennsylvania’s \$7.1 billion poultry industry is a year-round top priority,” said PA Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding. “We have strict biosecurity protocols in place both for Pennsylvania farms, and for poultry products shipped in and out of the state. We have had \$2 million budgeted and set aside since 2016 to respond to avian influenza, in addition to equipment, supplies, laboratories and highly trained experts who have been on high alert and are supporting our poultry farmers.

“There is no immediate public health concern for Pennsylvanians, and we are prepared to respond to this agricultural issue. However, wild birds carry the virus and do not respect property or state lines,” he added. “Anyone visiting a farm should be aware that your vehicles and shoes may carry the virus from other places you have walked. Clean them thoroughly and stay away from poultry barns unless you have to be there. Please be vigilant and do your part to protect our farms.”

An interagency HPAI task force works regularly to address the threat of disease to Pennsylvania’s wild and domestic bird populations. The task force includes the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, the departments of Agriculture, Health, General Services and

Environmental Protection, the State Police, the Game Commission, the Air National Guard, and U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Veterinary Services and Wildlife Services.

The task force will carry out the response plan, which includes education and public outreach, and minimizing risk factors through strict biosecurity measures and continued surveillance, testing, and management.

This is the first confirmed case of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Pennsylvania in commercial poultry since an outbreak in 1983-'84. As of April 15, 2022, infected birds in commercial and backyard poultry flocks had been confirmed in 27 states including most states surrounding Pennsylvania. [USDA's website includes a complete listing of confirmed domestic poultry infections](#) as well as those in wild birds. Genetic analysis of samples taken in other U.S. states has shown that the virus is being spread by infected wild birds. Wild birds in Pennsylvania were confirmed to be infected in March, including a bald eagle in Chester County and four ducks in Venango County.

Pennsylvania's three animal health laboratories analyzed nearly 200,000 samples for avian influenza last year. The laboratories, which make up the Pennsylvania Animal Diagnostic Laboratory System, have the capacity to test many more samples, if necessary.

The department has reviewed procedures, inventoried supplies and protective equipment in preparation for HPAI, and has held monthly meetings with poultry producers, veterinarians, USDA officials and other stakeholders monthly, escalating to bi-monthly in February as infections were detected among migrating wild birds.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza is mainly spread through direct contact between healthy birds and bodily waste from infected birds. The disease can cause sudden death without clinical signs; lack of energy and appetite; decreased egg production; soft-shelled or misshapen eggs; swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, and hocks; purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs; nasal discharge, coughing, sneezing, lack of coordination and diarrhea.

If you suspect your poultry is infected with avian influenza, please report your concerns 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to the Pennsylvania Bureau of Animal Health and Diagnostic Services at 717-772-2852, option 1.

Sick or dead wild birds should be reported to the Pennsylvania Game Commission at 610-926-3136 or pgc-wildlifehealth@pa.gov. For more information about avian influenza, visit the department's website, agriculture.pa.gov. For a [complete listing of confirmed infections](#) in the U.S. and detailed information on biosecurity visit the USDA's website here [USDA APHIS | Defend the Flock Program](#).

MEDIA CONTACT: Shannon Powers – shpowers@pa.gov

###