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PRESS RELEASE
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UGA EXTENSION IN SPALDING COUNTY

ISSUES AVIAN INFLUENZA UPDATE

As an addition to the Small Flock work session hosted by the UGA Extension Office in November 2014, we are asking that everyone who has backyard poultry flocks will read the following information and be aware of this growing problem.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, HPAI, is a strain of avian influenza characterized by high morbidity and mortality in poultry, as high as 100%. All commercially produced poultry is tested for avian influenza prior processing. Backyard flocks are not tested prior to processing. Poultry products and eggs are safe for human consumption. Proper poultry handling and cooking techniques should be followed. Please consult the Georgia Department of Agriculture link <http://agr.georgia.gov/avian-influenza.aspx> for frequently asked questions.

Biosecurity measures are critical in preventing AI. Direct link to USDA APHIS Biosecurity for Birds <https://www.healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov>.

Avian influenza has had a damaging effect on the US poultry industry in recent months. It can't make humans sick but has devastating effects on chickens, turkeys, quail, pheasants, guineas and others. It is an animal health issue not a food safety or public health issue. Backyard flock producers play a critical role in protecting their flocks as well as contributing to the protection of Georgia's poultry industry.

There has not been a confirmed AI case in GA. Since December 2014, AI has affected 21 states and 48 million birds. AI is expected to return with the onset of cool wet weather and waterfowl migration. A confirmed AI case will result in the loss of all birds in the affected flock, quarantine on that premise, premise AI monitoring, AI monitoring in identified zones and restriction of all livestock movement within zones among other impacts.

While the commercial poultry industry in GA has the greatest risk in terms of potential for loss it also has multiple safeguards in place and has limited exposure to migratory waterfowl. Avian influenza can more easily be introduced into GA through backyard chicken flocks.

Protect backyard poultry by having and following a biosecurity plan. To protect backyard chickens, UGA Extension offers small flock owners these recommendations.

Keep Your Distance

- Restrict access to your property and your birds.

- Consider placing the birds inside a fence, and only allow those who care for the birds to come in contact with them.
- If visitors have backyard chickens of their own, do not let them come in contact with your birds.
- Game birds, migratory waterfowl and wild birds should not have contact with your flock.
- Keep chickens inside a pen or coop, and do not let them run free.

Keep Clean

- Wear clean clothes when coming in contact with your birds; scrub your shoes with disinfectant.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before entering the chickens' pen.
- Clean cages, and change food daily.
- Keep stored feed in enclosed containers and protected from wild birds and vermin.
- Establish a good rodent control program.
- Clean and disinfect equipment that comes in contact with your birds or their droppings, including cages and tools.
- Remove manure before disinfecting.
- Properly dispose of dead birds.
- Use municipal water or well as a drinking source instead of giving chickens access to ponds or streams. The avian influenza virus can live for long periods on surface waters.

Don't Bring Disease Home

- If you have been near other birds or bird owners, at a feed store or bird hunting, for instance, clean and disinfect your vehicle's tires and your equipment before going home. Shower and put on clean clothing before approaching your flock.
- Keep any new birds or birds that have been off-site separate from your flock for at least 30 days.

Don't Borrow the Virus

- Do not share tools, equipment or supplies with other bird owners.
- If you do bring borrowed items home, clean and disinfect them before you bring them home.

Know the Signs of a Sick Bird:

- A sudden increase in deaths, a clear-sign of the N5NW strain of the virus.

- A drop in egg production, or soft, thin-shelled or misshapen eggs.
- A lack of energy or poor appetite.
- Watery and green diarrhea.
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs and legs.
- Swelling around the eyes.
- Nasal discharge.

Early detection is critical to prevent the spread of avian influenza. If you suspect your flock is infected, call the Georgia Poultry Laboratory Network **Avian Influenza hotline** at **770-766-6850**.

If there is any doubt or you have any suspicions don't hesitate to contact the **Avian Influenza Hotline at 770-766-6850**.

County Extension offices are prepared to assist as a source of information on avian influenza and to assist any poultry growers determine if a current backyard flock concern is or is not avian influenza. Extension offices can provide information on biosecurity plans for poultry growers. Extension can assist anyone wishing to know more about avian influenza in poultry or wild birds.

Agriculture is the largest segment of Georgia's economy. Poultry tops the commodity list. Many Georgians enjoy raising poultry at home. All Georgians are asked to be aware of avian influenza and take appropriate actions to help prevent AI. Practice biosecurity.

References:

Georgia Department of Agriculture
UGA Extension Poultry Science

Additional online information:

UGA Extension

<http://extension.uga.edu/topics/poultry/avian-flu/>

To learn more about how to care for backyard flocks, see the UGA Extension publications on the topic at extension.uga.edu/publications.

Georgia Department of Agriculture

<http://agr.georgia.gov/avian-influenza.aspx>

This USDA APHIS site contains multiple biosecurity for birds publications.

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/aphis_pubs.php?ndx=2&fltr=Bird%20Biosecurity

Direct link to USDA APHIS Biosecurity for Birds

<https://www.healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov>

Hotline for Avian Influenza

For general questions and concerns about Avian Influenza (bird flu) in Georgia:
(855) 491-1432

Report a Suspected Case

If you suspect a case of Avian Influenza (bird flu), please report it immediately
(855) 491-1-GDA

You are the best protection your birds have. Practice biosecurity.

For more information contact:

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