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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

What Hobby Poultry Owners Should Know About Preventing Avian Influenza

INDIANAPOLIS (16 February 2022)—Avian influenza can be devastating to all poultry—even small, hobby flocks. The virus can cause reduced egg production, general illness or even sudden death to chickens, turkeys and other poultry species. With cases cropping up in three states in the last week, hobby flock owners should take steps to keep their flocks safe.

Poultry owners should practice good biosecurity by blocking possible sources of the virus. This includes minimizing foot traffic from visitors into the chicken coops and pasture areas. The avian influenza (AI) virus (and other disease-causing agents) can be carried in on clothing and shoes. Avoid visiting other flocks and handling other people's birds.

Anyone entering a chicken coop or pasture area should wear boot covers or shoes dedicated to that space only. Change shoes, boots or clothing after wearing them in public.

Equipment, such as feed buckets, hoses and waterers, can be contaminated. Therefore, equipment should be cleaned and disinfected before use—especially if it has contact with birds from outside the home flock. Vehicles can transport germs on tires, too.

Prevent contact with wild birds. Migratory waterfowl (ducks, geese, etc.) are known to carry AI without becoming ill or dying. Because they shed the virus in their droppings, bodies of water and other spaces where they congregate can pose a higher risk. Keeping poultry confined to a coop or a fenced space can help to reduce possible exposure.

Watch for signs of illness in your flock. Birds affected with HPAI may show one or more of the following signs:

- 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
- Incoordination
- Diarrhea

At the first signs of any of these, call the **USDA Healthy Birds Hotline: 866-536-7593**. Callers will be routed to a federal or state veterinarian in Indiana for case assessment. Dead birds should be double-bagged and refrigerated for possible testing.

Essential points to note about the current ongoing avian influenza situation:

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1. The food supply is safe. All shipments of poultry and eggs are tested to ensure the absence of avian influenza (AI) before moving into the food supply.
2. No cases of human illness have been reported for the strains of HPAI that are currently circulating in the United States; however, poultry owners should practice good hygiene/handwashing after handling birds.

Learn more about biosecurity practices and keeping poultry safe online at:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/defend-the-flock-program/defend-the-flock-program>

SITUATION UPDATES & NOTIFICATIONS

The Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) has established a webpage to provide situation updates, as needed, regarding avian influenza: www.in.gov/boah/species-information/avianbirds/highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza/ . A link on that page will allow anyone to sign up to receive email and/or text notices when updates are posted. Please subscribe and/or encourage others to do so.

The Board of Animal Health may be found online at: www.in.gov/boah; on social media at: [www.facebook.com\INBOAH](https://www.facebook.com/INBOAH) and Twitter at: @INBOAH.

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