

Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture
KENT A. LEONHARDT



304-558-3550

agriculture.wv.gov



Facebook: West Virginia Department of Agriculture



Twitter: @WVDeptofAg

NEWS RELEASE
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Contact: Crescent Gallagher
Communications Director
304/558-3708; 304/380-3922 (cell)
cgallagher@wvda.us

**STATE'S POULTRY FARMERS URGED TO EXERCISE EXTRA CAUTION
AFTER TENNESSEE AVIAN INFLUENZA CASE**

Charleston, W.Va. – West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt is sending an urgent reminder to West Virginia's poultry farmers – both commercial and "backyard" – to step up biosecurity practices and to be especially vigilant for any signs of sickness in their birds following the discovery of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) at a farm in Lincoln County, Tenn., Sunday.

"Poultry is West Virginia's largest agricultural sector, providing more than \$320 million in receipts in 2015," said Commissioner Leonhardt. "While we've seen no sign of AI here, and it doesn't pose a serious risk to human health or the food supply, it is important that we work together to protect this vital industry."

Poor biosecurity has been linked to the spread of disease in past outbreaks. Good biosecurity means adhering strictly to simple precautions that minimize the possibility of transmitting diseases from one farm to another.

Recommended biosecurity practices:

- Keep farm visitors to an absolute minimum, and keep records of those who do visit in case authorities need to trace a disease outbreak.
- AI can survive on vehicle tires, footwear and even in the nasal passages of humans. Clean and disinfect shoes, clothes, hands and vehicle tires before entering production areas and park as far away as is practical. Clean all visible dirt and then apply disinfectant. Disposable boots and coveralls are advisable for visitors.
- Don't share equipment with other farms.
- Avoid live bird sales or other places where fowl are comingled.

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- Prevent contact among wild birds and domestic fowl.
- IMMEDIATELY REPORT any signs of disease (unusual bird deaths, sneezing, nasal discharge, diarrhea, poor appetite, drop in egg production, purple discoloration of wattles, comb and legs) to the WVDA at 304-538-2397 / 304-558-2214 after business hours, or the USDA at 1-866-536-7593.

More biosecurity information is available at www.aphis.usda.gov/animalhealth/defendtheflock.

Since Sunday, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture have moved rapidly to quarantine the premises, depopulate the birds and disinfect the farm to destroy the virus before it can spread elsewhere.

AI outbreaks are not uncommon, so limiting their spread is critical to minimizing their negative economic impact. AI, which can be classified as high pathogenicity or low pathogenicity, is believed to circulate in asymptomatic wild birds, and is an ongoing concern worldwide. This is the only confirmed case of HPAI in the U.S. so far this year. Indiana had an incident last year. In 2015, a multi-state AI outbreak affected 48 million birds on 223 farms in the West and Midwest and became the largest animal health emergency in U.S. history.

West Virginia previously dealt with AI in 2002 and 2007. Extra safeguards were developed and refined following those incidents, but they are no guarantee against AI finding its way into domestic fowl in the Mountain State.

WVDA tests every commercial flock before they are moved from the farm for any reason, ensuring that sick birds are not being trucked past other poultry farms in the region. The regional laboratory in Moorefield – in the heart of poultry country – can perform a wide range of tests, including rapid screening tests.

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