



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VIRUS DEADLY TO POULTRY DETECTED IN TENNESSEE

NASHVILLE — The state veterinarian confirms that a strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has sickened a commercial chicken breeder flock in Lincoln County.

“Many Tennessee families rely on the poultry industry for their livelihoods, and the state is working closely with local, county and federal partners and the poultry industry to control the situation and protect the flocks that are critical to our state’s economy,” Gov. Bill Haslam said.

HPAI is known to be deadly for domesticated chickens and turkeys. On March 3, a commercial chicken facility in Lincoln County alerted the state veterinarian’s office at the Tennessee Department of Agriculture to an increase in chicken deaths. Testing at state and federal laboratories confirmed the presence of H7 HPAI in samples from that flock.

“Animal health is our top priority,” state veterinarian, Dr. Charles Hatcher, DVM said. “With this HPAI detection, we are moving quickly and aggressively to prevent the virus from spreading.”

The facility is under quarantine, along with approximately 30 other poultry farms within a 10 kilometer radius (6.2 miles) of the site. The affected flock is being depopulated to stop potential spread of the illness, and officials are testing and monitoring other flocks within the quarantined area. No other flocks have experienced an increase in mortality.

HPAI does not pose a risk to the food supply. No affected animals entered the food chain. The risk of human infection with avian influenza during poultry outbreaks is very low. In fact, no transmission to humans was reported during the outbreak that affected commercial poultry farms in the Midwestern United States in 2015. Also, this is not the same strain identified in that outbreak. However, out of an abundance of caution, officials with the Tennessee Department of Health and Tennessee Department of Agriculture are working together to address concerns about the health of individuals who are working on site or had contact with affected birds.

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DEADLY POULTRY VIRUS DETECTED

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2 - 2

Prior to this HPAI case, the most recent U.S. detection was in January of 2016 in a commercial turkey flock in Indiana.



"Although this is a situation no state wants to face, Tennessee has been actively preparing to respond to HPAI since it was first identified as a threat," Commissioner of Agriculture Jai Templeton said.

This is the first time highly pathogenic avian influenza has been detected in Tennessee, however low path avian influenza has affected Tennessee poultry flocks in the past. State officials and partners have extensive experience in effectively containing the virus. The plan for the control of avian influenza includes coordination of resources and response, and protocols for quarantine, testing, disposal, cleaning, disinfection and monitoring.

Owners of commercial and backyard poultry flocks are encouraged to closely observe their birds.

- Report a sudden increase in the number of sick birds or bird deaths to the state veterinarian's office at 615- 837-5120 and/or USDA at 1-866-536-7593
- Prevent contact with wild birds
- Practice good biosecurity <http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov/> with your poultry
- Enroll in the National Poultry Improvement Plan www.poultryimprovement.org
- Follow Animal Health Alert updates www.tn.gov/agriculture/article/ag-businesses-health-alerts

The source of the Lincoln County virus has not yet been determined. This version of H7 HPAI is confirmed as a North American wild bird lineage.

The state veterinarian and staff are focused on animal health and disease prevention. Each year, the Kord Animal Health lab tests approximately 22,000 samples from poultry for avian flu.

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