



Georgia Department of Agriculture

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Gary W. Black
Commissioner

March 10, 2015

EMERGENCY RULE

The Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Agriculture is tasked with protecting Georgia's agriculture industry and the public from agriculture related infectious or contagious diseases. Control of infectious or contagious diseases, as stated in O.C.G.A. § 4-4-1, is a necessary function for the health and welfare of the public.

The USDA National Veterinary Services Lab (NVSL) recently confirmed the presence of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N8 in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and California. The NVSL has also confirmed the presence of HPAI H5N2 in Washington, Idaho, Minnesota, and Missouri. No human cases of these avian influenza viruses have been detected in the United States, Canada, or internationally.

HPAI is a highly contagious poultry disease that spreads rapidly and has the potential to mutate. HPAI can also cause sporadic infections of the respiratory tract of humans. Most human infections with avian influenza A viruses have occurred following direct or close contact with infected poultry. Furthermore, Georgia's poultry industry has a \$28 billion annual impact on the State's economy, which would be devastated by the discovery of HPAI in Georgia. The normal movement of poultry and poultry products from any state in which avian influenza virus is present and spreading is a major and real threat to Georgia's public welfare.

In order to protect both the public and economic health of all Georgians, it is, therefore, absolutely essential, vital and in the best interest of the public welfare that requirements be effected to control and prevent the introduction of this contagious and infectious disease in this State. Accordingly, the Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture has determined that an Emergency Rule requiring the testing of all live birds prior to entry into Georgia is necessary.

In accordance with 50-13-4(b), an Emergency Rule is being promulgated effective March 10, 2015. This Rule will remain in effect no longer than 120 days from the effective date.