March 13, 2015

Below is a letter created by Minnesota turkey veterinarians.

First and foremost, the products sold in grocery stores, restaurants, etc., are safe to eat. The USDA has an influenza monitoring program that requires all flocks be tested for influenza prior to processing in order to prevent influenza virus from entering the food chain. In all circumstances, however, raw meat and poultry should be properly handled and cooked. (Turkey should always be cooked to 165 degrees Fahrenheit, as measured by a meat thermometer.)

According to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, there is no public health concern as this strain of avian influenza is confined to birds.

All farms need to be aware that the introduction of HPAI has been devastating to the farms at which it occurred and has impacted business significantly in those states experiencing HPAI incidences. It’s important to remember that indemnity doesn’t kick in until after a diagnosis is confirmed. If you have a case of HPAI occur on your farm, you will not receive reimbursement for all the birds that will die before a diagnosis is confirmed.

We are strongly encouraging our turkey grower to re-evaluate their biosecurity practices and pay special attention to the following areas:

1. **Turkeys should be kept away from areas in which they’d have access to or potentially share an environment with wild birds, especially waterfowl.** Ideally they should be housed indoors.

2. **Barn doors need to be closed at all times.**
   a. Consider discontinuing total cleans of finishing farms until we have a better understanding of the source of the recent introduction.
   b. Equipment (tillers, mortality carts, etc) need to be inside barns. Avoid moving equipment between barns as tires can’t be cleaned well, especially when it’s muddy outside.

3. **Nothing can enter the barn unless it’s been properly cleaned and disinfected.** Equipment (spare parts, loading panels, etc) need to be stored inside so that wild birds cannot access it. Trucks (poult trucks, shavings trucks, etc) are not to driven into the barn.

4. **Use barn specific coveralls and boots.** These should be kept in the barn’s entryway and changed into prior to entering the flock. Coveralls and boots should be removed and left in the entry. Do not wear them outside.

5. **Eliminate standing water** to prevent wild waterfowl from gathering on the farm property.

6. **Address feed spills immediately** to avoid attracting wild birds.

7. **Eliminate unnecessary farm visits** from outside personnel.

If you are interested, more information about avian influenza is available from the following sources:

- National Turkey Federation at EatTurkey.com/AI
- APHIS ataphis.usda.gov/animal_health/birdbiosecurity/AI/

Dedicated to fostering a successful Minnesota turkey industry and its ability to make positive contributions to consumers, the economy, the environment and its members.