Highly-Pathogenic Influenza in Poultry
Minnesota Talking Points
Updated 4.20.15 (8:30 a.m. - LD)

Background Information (National)
- The United States Department of Agriculture has confirmed several findings of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in the Pacific flyway since mid-December, 2014
- HPAI was also identified in commercial turkeys and chickens in British Columbia (also part of the Pacific flyway) in November 2014
- The last time a HPAI virus in poultry was identified in the U.S. was in 2004 (found in chickens in Texas)
  - Birds were quickly depopulated with no spread to any commercial flocks

Background Information (Minnesota)
- The USDA and Board of Animal Health recently announced a number of cases of HPAI in a commercial turkey flock in several counties in Minnesota.
  - This is the same strain of virus previously identified in the Pacific Flyway
- Minnesota has successfully identified, responded to and eliminated other influenza viruses in poultry in past years
- There is a network of state and federal agencies working in concert with the poultry industry to minimize the impact of this finding and regain Minnesota’s disease-free status
- Affected flock will be depopulated
- The producer and government agencies are working together to create a flock plan which includes protocol on carcass disposal and cleaning/disinfection of the barns

Food Safety
- The risk to the public is very low and there is no food safety concern. Any risk of infection would be limited to people in direct contact with affected birds.
- As a reminder, poultry and eggs should always be handled properly and cooked to an internal temperature of 165 °F
- All affected poultry are prohibited by law from entering the marketplace

Wild Birds
- Waterfowl, gulls and shorebirds are the natural reservoirs (carriers) of avian influenza viruses. Although wild birds carry 144 possible subtypes if avian influenza viruses, rarely does it cause disease or mortality.
- This new, highly-pathogenic variety of influenza is unprecedented in that it has not been found in North America prior to the recent discovery on the Pacific Coast, despite years of wild bird surveillance.
- Wild birds in the West Coast belong to the Pacific Flyway, and their migration patterns differ from wild birds that commonly migrate through Minnesota, which belong to the Mississippi Flyway.

Board of Animal Health
- The Board exists to find and eliminate diseases in livestock and domestic poultry
- Board field staff members contacted bird owners in the 10 km (6.2 miles) control area
  - Flocks were tested and placed under a 30-day quarantine
- Board staff is contacting bird owners in the surveillance zone (an additional 10 km past the control area) and asking them to closely monitor their flocks and report sick/dead birds
- Every commercial turkey, broiler and layer flock in MN is tested for influenza by the Board prior to going to market
Part of the Board’s voluntary AI surveillance program
- Testing detects any strain of influenza virus
- Some smaller flocks in greater MN and live bird markets in the twin cities also participate in surveillance
- Influenza is a reportable disease in MN
  - Veterinarians, producers and others involved with live production are required to let the Board know of any positive influenza test results, signs in poultry that may look like influenza, and unusual death loss
- This new case of HPAIV in turkeys is tragic. We know that ultimately wild birds are involved as a reservoir but the specifics of how this virus got into this house is an ongoing investigation. What we do know is that there is nothing that can be done about what is happening in wild birds.
- Commercial poultry flocks are protected with biosecurity and we think that is part of the reason why cases have not happened in more flocks. Biosecurity is a way of managing flocks and a series of practices that isolates flocks from all outside sources of infection, whatever they are.
- Backyard flock owners should also practice strict biosecurity, including preventing birds from exposure and/or co-mingling with wild waterfowl, wild birds and other types of poultry

Minnesota Department of Health
- MDH’s primary role is to coordinate with animal health agencies, local public health, and industry to identify, protect, and monitor the health of poultry workers and others in direct contact with infected birds.
- MDH serves as a source of information for the public on any human health risks.
- The risk to the public is very low and there is no food safety concern. Any risk of infection would be limited to people in direct contact with affected birds.
- No human cases of infection with this strain of the virus (H5N2) have been detected in the U.S. or other countries. But, we will provide guidance for poultry workers on precautions to take while handling affected birds, and will monitor them for 10 days to make sure they do not develop any respiratory symptoms.
- Always wash your hands after handling wild birds or live poultry.

Messages for Poultry Producers and Backyard Flock Owners
- Continue to closely monitor your birds
- Be proactive in monitoring for disease
  - Test your flock for influenza – call the Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory at 320-231-5170 for more info
- Prevent your birds from exposure and/or co-mingling with wild waterfowl, wild birds and other types of poultry
- Report sick birds to your veterinarian
- Report unusual death loss to your veterinarian and/or the Board of Animal Health immediately
- Avoid sharing equipment with other producers/farms
- Restrict visitors on your farm

Poultry Industry
- These introductions appear to be isolated incidents and there have been no cases to date of barn-to-barn spread on the same farm. Of course the final verdict on source will come from the BAH after their epi investigations are complete. Our turkey growers continue to be on high alert and have adjusted their sanitation procedures to protect their turkey flocks.
Indemnity / Grower Costs

- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will reimburse growers for birds that must be euthanized because of High Path Avian Influenza.
- If HPAI is suspected (either because the birds exhibit clinical signs, have increased mortality or they have been tested for HPAI), a USDA assessor will evaluate the status of the flock.
- No reimbursement is made for birds that perish prior to HPAI being confirmed by testing. Reimbursements will be made for birds that are alive at the time of the assessment. Reimbursement will also be made for certain other costs related to the event, including cleaning and disinfection.
- The value of the turkeys is based on several factors. The older the turkey, the greater the value (as the grower would have more invested in the birds as they get older).

Exports

- Of the approximate 50 countries that the state of Minnesota exported turkey to in the past year, we currently have state or country bans in 11 of them.
- The rest are open or only ban at the county level. In addition, Mexico, our most important trade partner, recently limited its ban to only product sold for raw sale in that country - most of the product we ship is sold for cooked production.

For "Rumor" of a Flock (that hasn't been NVSL confirmed yet):

- Commercial poultry flocks in Minnesota are routinely tested for avian influenza prior to going to market. This type of surveillance has been in place in our state for over 40 years. If there is a suspect case of avian influenza, the Board of Animal Health follows up with the situation immediately and closely monitors the situation. Cases of avian influenza are not confirmed positive or announced through USDA until the samples have been tested at and confirmation has been received from NVSL.

Impact on the avian influenza outbreak on overall turkey supplies in the United States

- According to the National Turkey Federation: The annual production of more than 240 million turkeys occurs in more than 25 states across the country, and this ensures consumers will be able to find all of the turkey products they currently enjoy. For context, the H5N2 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza has affected less than one percent of the turkey population. For the individual producers and companies affected, this is extremely serious. The impact on the consumer, however, should be minimal. Consumers to this point should not have any trouble finding the turkey products they always have enjoyed at a reasonable price.