

Avian Influenza and Food Safety

Extension Food Safety- Disease Info Sheet- March 2015

As of March 17, 2015, The Missouri Department of Agriculture has confirmed that a turkey growing facility in Jasper County, MO and one in Moniteau County, MO have been infected with H5N2 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). More information on the cases in Missouri is available from: <http://agriculture.mo.gov/avian-influenza.php>. A backyard poultry flock in Leavenworth County KS also tested positive for H5N2 HPAI on March 13, 2015. The case in Jasper County MO is near Crawford and Cherokee Counties in Kansas. More information on the HPAI situation in Kansas is available from: www.agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/division-of-animal-health/animal-disease-control-and-traceability/avian-influenza

Key Consumer Messages

Here are some of the key food safety and public health messages that can be shared with concerned members of the public, with more detailed information on the topics listed below:

1. It is safe to consume properly handled and cooked poultry products, including meat and eggs.
2. No human cases of the avian influenza virus has been detected in the US, Canada, or internationally, and there is no immediate public health concern. The only way that humans have been infected with avian influenza is through direct contact with infected poultry.
3. If you have a backyard poultry flock, or are a commercial producer, bird owners should continue to practice good biosecurity, including preventing contact between your birds and wild birds.

Food Safety

It is safe to consume properly handled and cooked poultry products, including meat and eggs. As with many viruses, proper cooking temperatures will easily kill the avian influenza virus. Therefore, the same safe handling practices that help to control *Salmonella* in poultry and eggs will also control avian influenza. As always, consumers should use proper egg and poultry meat handling practices, including the following:

- Eggs should be cooked until the yolks are firm and egg dishes (such as quiches or casseroles) should be cooked until the temperature reaches 160°F on a cooking thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the food.
- Products which include raw eggs, such as cookie dough, homemade ice cream and eggnog should NOT be consumed unless the egg mixture has been cooked to 160°F or pasteurized eggs or egg products were used. More information on egg safety is available from: www.foodsafety.gov/keep/types/eggs/
- When cooking any poultry (including turkey, chicken, duck, etc.), a food thermometer should be used to ensure that the internal temperature of the thickest part of the meat reaches 165°F. More information on poultry meat safety is available from: www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/meatchart.html
- Hands, utensils and surfaces that have come into contact with raw poultry should be carefully washed with soap and warm water. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw poultry and eggs.
- Ensure that juices from raw poultry do not touch or mix with foods that will be eaten raw.

Note that the facilities infected with avian influenza in Missouri and Kansas have been quarantined and no birds from the involved flocks will enter the food system.

Avian Flu Virus

No human cases of the avian influenza virus has been detected in the US, Canada, or internationally, and there is no immediate public health concern. Though it is extremely rare, humans can contract Avian Influenza. Most of these human cases have been linked to the home slaughter and handling of diseased or dead birds prior to cooking. If your birds show any of the signs of avian influenza as listed below, do not handle the birds, but report them to your local or state veterinarian.

- Sudden increase in bird deaths
- Sneezing, coughing, nasal discharge
- Watery or green diarrhea
- Lack of energy
- Drop in egg production
- Swelling around the eyes, neck, and head
- Purple discoloration of wattles, combs, and legs

Symptoms in humans can range from flu-like symptoms to eye infections, pneumonia, and acute respiratory distress. If you have these symptoms and believe that you have come into contact with infected animals, contact your health care provider immediately.

Protecting the Flock

If you have a backyard poultry flock, or are a commercial producer, bird owners should continue to practice good biosecurity, including preventing contact between your birds and wild birds. More information on this topic is available in numerous resources such as *Avian Influenza Biosecurity for Small Flock Owners*, University of Missouri Extension. May 2008. <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G8910> and others listed in the resource list below.

Additional Information

- Avian Flu – eXtension Homepage: www.extension.org/pages/24425/avian-influenza-homepage#.VQGS6eHfDLk
- eXtension: [Avian Influenza and Food Safety](#)
- eXtension: [Protecting Backyard Flocks from Avian Influenza](#)
- eXtension: [Avian Influenza and Commercial Flocks](#)
- FDA: Avian Flu: What Consumers need to Know- www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm085550.htm#what
- Basics of Bird Flu: Avian Influenza. University of Missouri Extension. May 2008. <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G8909>
- Kansas State Research and Extension news story on Avian Influenza. March 17, 2015. www.k-state.edu/media/newsreleases/mar15/avianinfluenza31715.html
- University of Missouri Extension news story on Avian Influenza. March 11, 2015. <http://extension.missouri.edu/n/2472>

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