

Biosecurity Alert:

Low-Pathogenic Avian Influenza Found in Delmarva Region

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February 11, 2004

Low-pathogenic avian influenza has been confirmed in the Delmarva (Delaware, Maryland and Virginia) poultry-producing area. Apparently, the H7N2 virus was discovered in a farm belonging to an independent grower in Kent County, Delaware. The producer raised chickens for New York's live bird market. Twelve thousand birds on that farm were culled and 20 farms within a 2-mile radius were tested.

On Tuesday, February 10, birds were destroyed on a second farm (5 miles from the first) in Sussex County. This was a farm with 72,000 roaster chickens. This flock was believed to have been infected by another flock nearby raised for the New York live bird markets. In addition to the destruction of the second flock, 80 farms have been quarantined. As a precaution, poultry sales, auctions and meetings are being cancelled, and poultry farms are being tested for the virus.

As a result of this outbreak in Delaware, Russia, Hong Kong, Mexico and the Philippines have already imposed bans on poultry from that state. Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Poland, Saudi Arabia and China have imposed bans on all U.S. poultry. The Russian ban includes live birds, incubated eggs, feed and feed additives. The ban will extend to nearby states if the virus is found outside the infected area. So far, the H7 avian influenza virus has not crossed over to humans. The current strain causing problems in countries of the Far East is the H5N1 virus.

Even though Delaware does not share a border with West Virginia, it is imperative that the West Virginia poultry industry and allied industries take extra precautions to ensure that the virus does not infect any flocks in West Virginia. Stepping up biosecurity measures is a very good idea since West Virginia shares a border with Virginia, which is part of Delmarva region.

Non-essential visitors to poultry farms should not be allowed. When visits are needed, visitors should wear disposable clothing. All disposable clothing and boots should be left on each farm for proper disposal and not be carried between farms. Trucks and other vehicles should be parked as far away from poultry houses as possible, and tires should be disinfected before and after each visit. All persons visiting poultry farms for legitimate reasons should have disinfectants and cleaners in their vehicles with which to wash their hands, especially if they will be handling live birds or other equipment on farms.

Any equipment used on farm should be cleaned and disinfected, and organic material from farms should be adequately disposed of. Producers attending meetings with other producers should remember to change farm clothing and boots and disinfectant their vehicles or use nonfarm vehicles. Even so, after such meetings all clothing should be laundered as soon as possible. It may seem that normal biosecurity measure already in place will be enough, but current conditions may change very rapidly. Thus, it is imperative to have stricter security measures than otherwise needed to minimize any possible negative effects.