

## Protecting America's Live Bird Markets

To address the persistence of low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) associated with the live bird marketing system in the United States, Veterinary Services (VS), a program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), is instituting a cooperative program with States and industry to prevent and control the disease not only in the markets themselves, but also among production premises and poultry distributors that supply those markets. The program establishes an important relationship that requires commercial and noncommercial industries to work together to protect America's flocks.

Although birds affected with LPAI often show few or no clinical signs, the disease is highly contagious and its H5 and H7 subtypes have the potential to mutate into high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI). HPAI results in high mortality rates for poultry and causes trading partners to implement immediate trade restrictions. In other countries, cases of human infection have been linked to HPAI. Therefore, VS' LPAI program may have human health benefits as well. The program was first proposed to USDA in 2003 by the U.S. Animal Health Association. The control and prevention program targeting the live bird marketing system has multiple goals:

- Diagnose, control, and prevent the H5 and H7 LPAI subtypes;
- Improve biosecurity, sanitation, and disease control at participating operations; and
- Minimize the effects of LPAI on the U.S. commercial poultry industry.

These goals are achieved through regular monitoring and surveillance of all facilities in participating States. If LPAI is detected, a series of measures will be undertaken to clean, disinfect, and depopulate the affected premises in order to quickly contain and eradicate the disease. If no cases are found, such a program can help document that the United States is free of the H5 and H7 subtypes of the disease.

The LPAI program is coordinated by VS' National Center for Animal Health Programs, which provides personnel and resources to assist States' implementation and compliance with program requirements. Training is a key component of the program and ensures that employees at all participating facilities understand what biosecurity protocols are and why they are important for preventing the spread of dis-

ease and for protecting animal health.

States are responsible for enforcing LPAI program standards. Should LPAI be detected, Federal indemnification is available to participating facilities that follow all program directives. In order for a State to join the LPAI program, all of its live bird markets, as well as producers and distributors that supply those markets, must be registered or licensed with the State and must allow Federal and State inspectors access to their facilities, birds, and records. These facilities must also have written biosecurity protocols in place.

Under the program, testing is carried out by Federal and State officials. Samples for testing are collected by State and Federal animal health technicians, veterinary medical officers, and Federally accredited veterinarians. For most bird species, tracheal swabs are collected, but for waterfowl, cloacal swabs are taken. In addition, swabs taken from the environment at markets, production premises, and distribution locations are also tested for LPAI. This can include swabs of such things as conveyances and crates. Blood samples are also collected from poultry at production premises to qualify them for movement into the live bird marketing system. These swab and blood samples are submitted to USDA-approved State and university laboratories to test for the LPAI virus.

All approved laboratories must pass an annual proficiency test in order to participate in the program. Any avian influenza (AI) positive samples are sent to VS' National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, IA, to confirm the subtype of the virus and to test the pathogenicity of the virus.

### Live Bird Market Requirements

- Live bird markets may be tested for LPAI at any time, but testing must occur at least quarterly.
- Live bird market personnel must receive biosecurity training, and training records must be available and maintained in personnel files.
- Live bird markets are required to undergo regular, quarterly closures with depopulation, cleaning, and disinfection and downtime of at least 24 hours.
- Markets must be inspected by a State or Federal animal health official before reopening.
- Live bird markets that test positive for H5 and H7 subtypes will undergo mandatory closure. Such markets will be required to depopulate and perform cleaning and disinfection.

- Before a live bird market can reopen for business, the facility must pass inspection by a State or Federal animal health official and be retested. If the results are positive, the market will be shut down again and the sanitation process will be repeated, followed by inspection and retesting.
- Any live bird market that tests positive for H5 and H7 subtypes, will be required to undergo monthly testing. Should a positive result occur again, the market will be shut down for depopulation and cleaning and disinfection. After three consecutive negative tests, the market will be able to return to a schedule of quarterly testing.
- Whenever birds are found to be positive, for H5 and H7 subtypes, an investigation will be initiated to determine where the virus is occurring in the system.
- Markets are responsible for verifying bird identification and obtaining documentation of negative AI test results for all birds at the time of their receipt. If records are not available, the birds cannot enter the market. Records for avian species, which include their date of entry and premise of origin identification number, must be retained for at least 12 months.

### **Poultry Distributor Requirements**

- Poultry distributors, including dealers, haulers, auction markets, and wholesalers, are subject to random inspections by State and Federal officials. These random inspections will be performed at least quarterly to ensure equipment is clean and sanitary and that records are being kept in accord with program requirements.
  - Distributors' property including facilities, conveyances, crates, and birds, will be tested at least quarterly for AI.
  - Distributors' facilities that test positive for H5 and H7 subtypes of AI will undergo depopulation of any birds on the premises followed by cleaning and disinfection.
  - Any distributor's birds that tests positive for H5 and H7 subtypes will be required to undergo monthly testing. After three consecutive negative tests, the distributor will be able to return to a schedule of quarterly testing.
  - Whenever birds are found to be positive, an investigation will be initiated to determine where H5 or H7 AI subtypes are occurring in the system.
  - Distributors may only accept properly identified and properly documented birds from AI negative flocks with certification of negative test results accompanying each delivery of birds. Documentation and laboratory results must be provided when birds are delivered to other distributors and to the live bird markets.
- Distributors must maintain records of bird pickups and deliveries for 12 months.
  - Distributor vehicles, bird-holding devices, and any premises where birds are held must be clean and sanitary at all times. Before a distributor returns to a farm after visiting a live bird market, all cages, vehicles, and other equipment must undergo cleaning and disinfection.
  - Distributors may not transport live birds or other live animals from live bird markets.

### **Production Premises Requirements**

- All birds provided to a distributor or directly to a live bird market from a production premise must originate from an AI-negative flock. Production facilities and equipment must be clean and sanitary at all times. Categories of production premises and the testing requirements for each category are as follows:
  1. **LPAI-monitored flocks** are tested monthly for the virus for at least 3 months. At least 30 birds per flock must be tested 10 days prior to movement.
  2. **Established flocks** are those that have been maintained together for at least 21 days prior to sample collection with no additions to the flock. To qualify for the first shipment or to requalify after any breaks in the monthly sample-testing regimen, 30 birds must be tested within 10 days prior to movement.
  3. **Commingled flocks** are defined as groups of poultry from multiple sources that have been assembled for one or more shipments. When untested birds are added to the flock, previous test reports are void and the flock must requalify as an established flock. This requires that they wait 21 days before sampling and are tested 10 days prior to movement.
  4. **Nonmonitored flocks** are those which have not been on a program of monthly testing for at least 3 months. To qualify for sale in the live bird market system, 30 birds in the flock must be tested within 10 days of movement.
- In addition to testing regimens, production premises may be subjected to random inspections and testing by State and Federal animal health officials to ensure that their property, conveyances, and coops are clean and sanitary and that records are being kept in accord with program requirements.
- Findings of H5 or H7 AI will result in a quarantine of the infected premises, depopulation, and cleaning and disinfection. The premises will be inventoried in order to conduct tracebacks and traceforwards and to stop any possible spread of the disease. A negative environmental test result is required before restocking.

- Flock test records, as well as records of bird transfers, must be maintained for 12 months. Birds loaded for transportation to a distributor must be identified by premises of origin and must contain an appropriate date or lot number that will distinguish the shipment from others.
- Birds from production premises may not be sold directly to live bird markets unless the flock owner or manager is also registered as a distributor.

### **Additional Information**

For more information about APHIS programs and AI, please visit our Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/>.

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