

# Biosecurity For Birds: Background

## A Response to Poultry Disease

In early 2004, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) launched the Biosecurity For Birds outreach initiative in response to the outbreak in 2002/2003 of exotic Newcastle disease (END) in California and other Western states.

The outbreak of END in the west was the largest animal disease outbreak in the United States in 30 years. It took 10 months to eradicate and when it was over the State and Federal governments had spent more than \$160 million, and four million birds were depopulated. While a majority of the birds came from commercial operations, many came from backyard flocks and bird enthusiasts.

To prevent another disease outbreak of this magnitude, the USDA's Veterinary Services (VS) continues to work with individual states on disease surveillance aimed at non-commercial poultry and bird owners. As part of this effort, the Biosecurity For Birds program launched its mission to educate backyard poultry owners and bird enthusiasts about the steps they can take to prevent infectious poultry diseases such as END and avian influenza (AI) and what to do in the event a disease outbreak is suspected.

## The Campaign

Biosecurity For Birds has been a highly effective public outreach initiative that has made millions of people more aware and better prepared to deal with AI and END. Its target audience is backyard poultry and bird owners, as well as pet bird owners. Some key elements of the Biosecurity For Birds efforts include:

### Advertising

APHIS identified effective avenues for reaching backyard poultry owners. In addition to more traditional advertising venues such as ag radio and farming-related publications, APHIS has run ads in low-cost, high-circulation electrical co-op magazines, which were identified as a prime source of information for many backyard poultry owners.

APHIS has also reached out to a number of feed companies which agreed to run informational ads on their feed sacks at a nominal cost. Biosecurity For Birds feed sacks have found their way onto the shelves of local feed stores and major retailers, such as Wal-Mart, across the country. It is estimated that millions of people have seen these low-cost, educational and useful advertisements.

### Diverse Communities

APHIS employed several methods for reaching a wide array of diverse ethnic groups. These efforts included running translated ads in Hispanic, Vietnamese, Hmong and Filipino publications, as well as ads adapted to Native American and Amish publications in target states. In addition, APHIS created a Spanish-language education package that was distrib-



*You are the best protection your birds have.*

uted to Catholic Archdioceses with large Spanish-speaking congregations. Materials included a Spanish-language video about AI and END, Spanish-language “tracts” that fit into tract-holders in churches, as well as various brochures and other outreach materials.

### **Partnerships**

APHIS has partnered with 4-H and FFA to provide a variety of educational materials about AI and END to the next generation of poultry owners. Initiatives include the AI Fairs program, where APHIS provides FFA and 4-H groups with biosecurity-related materials such as signs, banners, brochures, drink cups and other giveaways (so that they can set up informational booths, often near poultry exhibits) at county and state fairs. This program, called AIFairs, is ongoing. Other efforts include a distance-learning program developed in conjunction with FFA to teach high school students the science of AI and END and how and why biosecurity practices are important. Most recently, FFA and APHIS produced a brief video for students on poultry biosecurity.

### **Internet**

APHIS reached out to PetSmart Charities, which hosted two webinars on the subject of AI for bird owners on their website. Early in the campaign, APHIS utilized Google’s Adwords program, which allowed poultry and bird owners searching for information about AI and END to more quickly find the Biosecurity For Birds website. The Biosecurity For Birds site includes in-depth information about AI and END, as well as links to some of the most useful biosecurity resources in the country.

### **Materials**

APHIS has developed a wide array of educational materials that are helping to inform backyard poultry owners and bird enthusiasts about AI and END. These materials run the gamut from brochures, fact sheets and posters to videos and comprehensive guidebooks. One of the most popular and useful publications is a bi-lingual calendar produced for the past three years. APHIS also produced materials in Spanish, and some materials in Vietnamese, Traditional Chinese and Tagalog. These materials are available through the Biosecurity For Birds website.

### **Stakeholders**

In 2006, APHIS held a series of avian influenza poultry preparedness briefings in four locations across the country: Georgetown, Delaware; Gainesville, Georgia; Madison, Wisconsin; and Tacoma, Washington. These briefings were attended by nearly 1,000 stakeholders, including backyard poultry owners, extension office representatives, organic growers and representatives from various state and federal agencies. These briefings were covered by many media outlets, including the Associated Press, the Seattle Post Intelligencer, Wisconsin Public Radio, Reuters, Fox News and a myriad of local television stations and community newspapers.