

USDA – TAHC JOINT NEWS RELEASE

USDA CONFIRMS HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA IN TEXAS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23, 2004--The U.S. Department of Agriculture today confirmed that the H5N2 strain of avian influenza in a flock of chickens in Texas is highly pathogenic avian influenza, the first such case in the United States in 20 years. USDA is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to forestall any human health impacts from this outbreak. There is no evidence to date of any human health implications of this HPAI virus in Texas.

“The H5 strain can be high or low pathogenic, and the clinical signs observed at the outset of this outbreak suggested that the disease was low path avian influenza,” said Dr. Ron DeHaven, USDA’s chief veterinary officer. “However, further testing by our National Veterinary Services laboratory in Ames, Iowa, determined that this strain is highly pathogenic avian influenza.”

The premises in Gonzales County, Texas, remains under quarantine, and the flock of approximately 6,608 broiler chickens were depopulated over the weekend.

USDA and the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) have started an epidemiological investigation that includes determining the source of the infection and surveillance testing within a 10-mile radius of the infected property.

“We urge everyone who has poultry to practice good biosecurity measures and report any sick birds or death losses to either TAHC or USDA,” said DeHaven. “Proper biosecurity, including wearing protective clothing and disinfecting any equipment before leaving a facility, will ensure this disease does not spread.”

HPAI spreads through bird to bird contact. HPAI viruses can also be spread by manure, equipment, vehicles, egg flats, crates and people whose clothing or shoes that may have come in contact with the virus.

For more information on avian influenza, please visit the APHIS Web site at www.aphis.usda.gov or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at www.cdc.gov.

Editorial Contacts:

Jim Rogers (202) 690-4755

APHIS Press Office (301) 734-7799

Texas Animal Health Commission Public Information 1-800-550-8242, ext 710