

Highlights of NAHMS Poultry '04 Part I: Reference of Health and Management of Backyard/Small Production Flocks in the United States, 2004

Poultry '04 is the National Animal Health Monitoring System's (NAHMS) second study of the U.S. poultry industry. Layers '99 was the first national study on poultry baseline health and management. Layers '99 estimated the prevalence and associated risk factors of *Salmonella enterica* enteritidis in U.S. layer flocks. For Poultry '04 NAHMS conducted a thorough assessment to determine the information needs of the poultry industry, researchers, and Federal and State governments. This needs assessment indicated a need for information regarding bird health, bird movement, and biosecurity practices of nontraditional poultry industries, such as backyard flocks, gamefowl, and live poultry markets.

Sampling circles

Data for Part I were collected via a questionnaire administered to owners of backyard flocks in 18 major poultry producing States (see map). A sample of large commercial poultry operations ($n = 350$) with at least 10,000 chickens or 5,000 turkeys was selected, and then a circle with a 1-mile radius was "drawn" around each of these selected operations. These circles were then canvassed for residences with birds other than or in addition to pet birds. A total of 349 of the 350 circles were canvassed. Over the 349 circles screened, there were 10,579 residences contacted, of which 156 had pet birds only and 763 had birds other than pet birds (backyard flocks). In addition, there were 668 commercial poultry operations (other than the ones selected to serve as the centers of the circles) within the 349 circles.

Poultry '04 Participating States



Bird types

Chickens of table-egg breeds were found in two-thirds (63.2 percent) of backyard flocks and accounted for 37.5 percent of all birds. Pet birds accounted for only 0.3 percent of the total bird population at residences with backyard flocks.

Gamefowl chickens were present in half the backyard flocks (50.2 percent) in the Southeast region and in only 4.1 percent of backyard flocks in the East region. Guinea-fowl presence ranged from 4.3 percent of backyard flocks in the East region to 31.7 percent of backyard flocks in the Midwest region.

On average, backyard flocks had 35.1 birds, ranging from an average of 26.1 birds in the Southeast region to 49.2 birds in the East region. Nearly 1 in 3 backyard flocks (31.8 percent) had fewer than 10 birds.

Bird health care

Use of a veterinarian's services was rare in backyard flocks (2.9 percent of backyard flocks overall). As flock size increased, the percentage of backyard flocks that used a veterinarian's services increased.

Vaccinations were given by only 2.8 percent of backyard flocks. Administration of vaccines increased as flock size increased.

External parasites were the most common health problem reported (5.5 percent of backyard flocks). In general, reported health problems increased as flock size increased. Nearly one-fourth of large backyard flocks (21.4 percent) reported respiratory problems.

Feed stores were the most important health-information source for backyard flocks (24.4 percent ranked feed stores very important). The Internet was ranked very important by 9.7 percent of backyard flock owners. The highest percentage of large backyard flocks reported that other producers and magazines/journals were very important sources of bird health information, while the highest percentage of medium and small backyard flocks ranked feed stores as very important.

About half of backyard flocks found bird health care products and services readily available. Backyard flocks in the Southeast region reported the most difficulty obtaining products/services. Small flocks reported more difficulty obtaining products/services (especially medications) compared to large flocks.

Ponds and bird feeders

Ponds that attract wild waterfowl were present on the property of 38.4 percent of backyard flocks, ranging from 64.6 percent in the Midwest region to 24.7 percent of backyard flocks in the Southeast region. Over half the backyard flocks (52.4 percent) that raised domestic waterfowl had a pond on the property that attracted wild waterfowl. Wild bird feeders were on the property of 40.0 percent of backyard flocks.

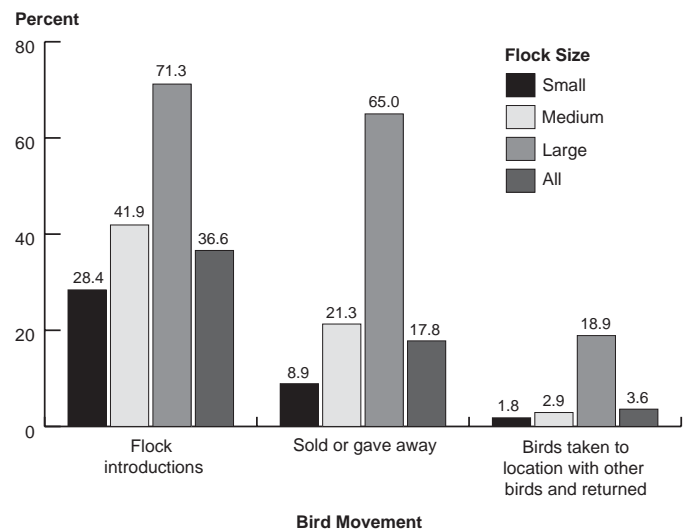
Bird movement

The percentage of backyard flocks that had one or more introductions of new birds during the previous 12 months ranged from 28.3 percent in the Southeast region to 51.7 percent in the Midwest region and 36.6 percent overall. The majority of backyard flocks with new flock additions (60.0 percent) obtained the new birds from within their same county.

Overall, 17.8 percent of backyard flocks sold or gave away live birds in the previous 12 months. Movement of birds from backyard flocks increased as flock size increased, with 65.0 percent of large flocks selling or giving away live birds.

Only 3.6 percent of backyard producers moved birds to locations where other birds were present (such as fairs, shows, etc.). Most producers who took birds to shows, etc., and returned them to their flocks went to events that were within their county or State.

Percentage of Backyard Flocks by Bird Movement and Flock Size



Mortality

Just over half of all backyard flocks (55.2 percent) had at least one bird death (other than birds slaughtered for human consumption) during the previous 12 months. Bird death loss during the previous year was 10.8 percent. Burial on the premises was the most common method of disposing of dead birds.

Producer characteristics

The most common reason for having birds was for fun/hobby, which ranked very high for 40.6 percent of backyard flocks. About one in four producers ranked family tradition, food, and lifestyle very high as reasons for having birds.

Overall, very few backyard flocks (3.5 percent) had someone in the household who worked for a commercial poultry operation, ranging from 0.9 percent of backyard flocks in the Southeast region to 8.5 percent of backyard flocks in the Midwest region.

For more information, contact:

USDA:APHIS:VS:CEAH
NRRC Building B, M.S. 2E7
2150 Centre Avenue
Fort Collins, CO 80526-8117
970.494.7000
E-mail: NAHMS@aphis.usda.gov
www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ceah/ncahs

#N437.0805

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Mention of companies or commercial products does not imply recommendation or endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture over others not mentioned. USDA neither guarantees nor warrants the standard of any product mentioned. Product names are mentioned solely to report factually on available data and to provide specific information.