

Avian Influenza in Birds – the Basics June 2006

NH Department of Agriculture, State Veterinarian

- 1) Disease background
 - a. Virus capable of infecting most domestic and wild bird species and **very rarely** non-human mammals and humans
 - b. 144 different strains of the virus have been recognized
 - c. H5N1 is only one of these strains
 - d. Infected birds can shed virus for days to weeks
 - e. Clinical signs run from unapparent to rapid death and everything in between
 - i. Respiratory – sneezing, wheezing, coughing
 - ii. Gastrointestinal – diarrhea, decreased feed intake
 - iii. Reproductive – decreased egg production, misshapen/soft/abnormal eggs
 - iv. General – ruffled feathers, depression
 - v. Vascular/skin – swollen, purple heads, combs, wattles, legs
- 2) Biosecurity – raising healthy birds
 - a. Wash your hands! For your birds and for you.
 - b. Shows require NPIP (National Poultry Improvement Plan) certification for that year - *Salmonella pullorum* and avian influenza free
 - c. Virus can survive in the environment for extended periods under specific conditions
 - d. Clean is important
 - i. Use dedicated shoes/clothes around birds to avoid tracking in/out disease
 - ii. Keep equipment clean/disinfected
 - iii. Be careful where you get birds – reputable, tested sources
 - iv. Keep your own records of replacements/sales
 - v. Keep new or sick birds segregated for at least 30 days
 - vi. Be judicious in allowing visitors to your flock – humans, clothes, cars, etc. can carry virus to many farms from a single source
- 3) Testing and surveillance is available
 - a. Wild and domestic bird surveillance is ongoing in NH and nationally
 - b. NPIP certification (USDA)
 - c. Foreign Strain Prevention (USDA)
 - i. Mandatory quarantine and testing for all bird imports (poultry, pets, etc)
 - ii. Ban on importation from countries/regions with confirmed H5N1 infections in domestic birds
 - d. NH RSA 436, Agr 2100
 - i. Poultry – hatching eggs and young birds have NPIP from source flock
 - ii. Poultry – mature birds (>20 weeks old) have negative avian influenza test
 - iii. Pet birds – veterinary certification that free from infectious disease and not from a quarantined area
- 4) Food safety concerns
 - a. Meat and eggs are safe
 - b. Wash your hands. Proper food hygiene is always appropriate.
 - c. World Health Organization cooking recommendations
 - i. Meat – 165 deg F
 - ii. Eggs – no runny yolk
 - d. Human exposure concerns with meals of raw poultry blood
 - e. There is no risk where the disease does not exist
- 5) Conclusion
 - a. Responsibility to your birds, customers, and community to be careful and knowledgeable about disease risks and control
 - b. http://nh.gov/agric/divisions/animal_industry/avian_influenza.htm
 - c. <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/CDCS/Avian+Flu/default.htm>
 - d. <http://www.avianinfluenzainfo.com/>