

## 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](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/>