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AVIAN INFLUENZA – NOT A FOOD SAFETY CONCERN

Influenza is a virus that can infect humans and many animal species, including poultry and other birds. Influenza is not uncommon and it has been around for centuries. Influenza in poultry falls into two groups: low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI), or highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

HPAI usually causes very high death rates in poultry flocks. Many Minnesota turkey and chicken flocks have tested positive for HPAI since March of this year. All flocks are tested for the virus, well before going to market. When infected flocks are identified, the birds are quarantined and any remaining birds are depopulated to prevent the spread of the disease. Birds from affected flocks are not marketed for their meat.

The risk to the public is very low, and there is no food safety concern. The H5N2 strain of HPAI currently being identified in Minnesota has also been found in other states and Canada.

Can humans be infected with HPAI?

No human cases of infection with this strain of the virus (H5N2) have been detected in the U.S. or other countries. However, some highly pathogenic avian flu viruses can infect people causing mild to severe respiratory illness. In most cases, people are infected after direct contact with birds that are sick with or died from highly pathogenic avian influenza. Symptoms in infected people can include influenza-like illness (e.g., fever, aches, respiratory symptoms) and red, itchy eyes. Person-to-person transmission of avian influenza viruses is very rare.

Avian influenza viruses are spread through direct contact with infected birds or through contact with contaminated bedding, feed or water.

FOOD SAFETY FOR POULTRY AND POULTRY PRODUCTS

Properly handled poultry and poultry products, such as eggs, are safe to eat. To ensure poultry is safe, follow these steps:

- Keep clean; wash hands, and clean and sanitize work surfaces and equipment.
- Separate raw and cooked poultry; avoid cross-contamination.
- Cook poultry thoroughly to an internal temperature of at least 165°F.

(continued)
• Chill; keep and store food at 40°F or below and the freezer at 0°F or below.
• Cook eggs until yolks and whites are firm and ensure any dishes containing eggs are cooked to 160°F.
• Use pasteurized eggs for dishes where eggs are raw or undercooked when they are eaten.

What to do

If you see sickness in birds, contact the Minnesota Board of Animal Health at 651-296-2942. For updates on the H5N2 situation in MN, visit Minnesota Board of Animal Health, avian influenza: www.bah.state.mn.us/avianinfluenza

Sick or dead wild birds should be reported to Minnesota Department of Natural Resources by calling 888-343-3637.

If you have food safety questions or concerns, contact the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Dairy and Food Inspection at 1-651-201-6027.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

• MDH Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza: http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/current/h5n2.html
• Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Minnesota fact sheet: www.bah.state.mn.us/media/mda-food-safety-hpaifactsheet.pdf
• FDA – What Consumers Need to Know about Avian Influenza - http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm085550.htm

Thank You to MDH for providing this information. Learn about the Partnership and Workforce Development Unit (PWDU) at: http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/pwdu/pwdunewsletter/index.html

CLASS SCHEDULE: 2015 CERTIFICATION AND RENEWAL

Certification
• Alexandria – May 19
• Thief River Falls – June 18
• Bemidji – August 12
• Rochester – August 13
• Moorhead – August 26
• Grand Rapids – September 16
• Mankato – September 19
• St. Cloud – October 15
• Marshall – October 21

Renewal
• Alexandria – May 19
• Thief River Falls – June 17
• Bemidji – August 13
• Rochester – August 13
• Moorhead – August 25
• Grand Rapids – September 16
• Mankato – September 19
• St. Cloud – October 13
• Marshall – October 20

For more class information: www.extension.umn.edu/foodsafety
or call 507-337-2819
or email schwa047@umn.edu