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HPAI DEPOPULATION PROCESS IN NORTHEAST NEBRASKA COMPLETE

LINCOLN - Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) Director Greg Ibach today announced that the depopulation of birds with, or exposed to, highly pathogenic H5N2 avian influenza (HPAI) in Dixon County is now complete.

According to Ibach, a total of 4.9 million laying hens and pullets were humanely depopulated and composted at five farms owned and operated by the same producer in Dixon County. Four of those farms had confirmed cases of HPAI, while the producer voluntarily depopulated the birds at the fifth farm in an effort to contain the spread of the virus within their operation. A backyard flock with epidemiological connections to the five farms, and located within the 6.2 mile quarantine zone established by NDA, also tested positive for the virus. Fewer than 100 mixed fowl were depopulated and buried on that property.

“I feel the depopulation process ran as smoothly as it did because of the working relationship and cooperation we received from local, state and federal agencies,” Ibach said. “I personally want to thank our staff for their hard work, dedication and long hours they put in to help prevent further spread of the virus. I also want to thank those within several key organizations who played a critical part in the response.”

Ibach said Governor Pete Ricketts signed an emergency declaration, and that gave the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, Nebraska State Patrol, Nebraska Department of Roads and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services additional flexibility to play vital roles in assisting NDA. He also said county emergency management teams were instrumental in daily operations in both Dixon and Knox counties.

“Our federal partners at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) were also a critical component to the success of the depopulation and now the cleaning and disinfection efforts,” Ibach said. “I’d like to thank each of these partners for their support and contributions to addressing this disease.”

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With the depopulation process completed, the work of cleaning and disinfecting each building and the equipment found in those buildings can begin in earnest. According to Ibach, USDA contracted crews have arrived in Dixon County to facilitate and oversee those cleanup efforts. Upon successful completion of the cleaning and disinfection process, environmental tests will be conducted to ensure the presence of the virus has been eliminated. Once that testing is successfully complete, the producer will be able to repopulate its operation.

NDA staff will be returning to regular duties, while an individual specializing in composting protocol will remain on site in Dixon County to monitor the compost piles daily to ensure proper temperature levels are being maintained to effectively eliminate the virus. The compost piles will remain in place at the affected properties until regulatory officials confirm the process has eliminated the virus from the compost material. Once the virus has been successfully eliminated the compost can be utilized for its nutrient value.

As part of NDA's ongoing surveillance work, a total of 48 farms with poultry that are located within a 6.2 mile radius of the affected farms remain under quarantine. Those flocks have all undergone one round of avian influenza testing with no further cases of the virus detected. Those flocks will undergo another round of testing in July, and if the virus is not detected at that time, NDA will begin the quarantine release process for those farms.

“While we are cautiously optimistic that the virus has been contained at this time, I continue to urge all poultry operations – big and small – to continue to exercise the strictest of biosecurity measures on their farms,” Ibach said. “We must all work together to prevent the spread of the HPAI virus in Nebraska.”

Additional information on HPAI can be found online at www.nda.nebraska.gov.

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NOTE TO MEDIA:

The NDA weekly update on HPAI will no longer be sent on a regular basis.
If there are any significant developments, a press release will be issued.