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DEPARTMENT FINDS THIRD CASE OF HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA *Risk to people from HPAI H5 infections considered to be low*

LINCOLN - The Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) in conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has confirmed preliminary testing shows the presence of a third case of highly pathogenic H5N2 avian influenza (HPAI) in Dixon County. The third farm (referred to as Dixon 3) is within a mile of the initial farm (referred to as Dixon 1) identified last week and is owned by the same operator.

Dixon 3 is a flock of 500,000 pullets (young hens). Dixon 1 and Dixon 2, announced last week, collectively have 3.5 million laying hens.

"These farms are in close proximity to each other so this finding, while unfortunate, is not unexpected," said NDA Director Greg Ibach. "We continue to receive great support from our federal, state and local partners, as well as from the operator, as we work to control the spread of the virus."

All three sites are under quarantine, a perimeter has been established around each facility, and the birds are being depopulated. Under the USDA protocol, NDA is visiting all locations that have poultry within a 6.2 mile radius of Dixon 3 to conduct testing. Due to the proximity of Dixon 3 to the other facilities, the 6.2 mile radius overlaps significantly.

The preliminary positive test at Dixon 3 is expected to be confirmed by officials at a federal laboratory sometime over the holiday weekend, but Ibach said response teams in Dixon County already are working at Dixon 3 to address the HPAI finding.

Gov. Pete Ricketts last week issued a state emergency declaration to provide NDA and other state agencies with appropriate resources to address the HPAI situation.

The Centers for Disease Control considers the risk to people from HPAI H5 infections to be low. Proper handling and cooking of poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165 degrees kills the virus. Dixon 1 and 2 are egg laying facilities and therefore the chickens are not consumed, and the eggs from these facilities are processed and go through pasteurization, eliminating product consumption risk.

Ibach is asking Nebraska poultry producers, large and small, to follow strict biosecurity measures on their farms and to monitor their flocks for symptoms of the virus and notify NDA immediately if they suspect any problems. All bird owners, whether commercial producers or backyard enthusiasts, should prevent contact between their birds and wild birds, and report sick birds or unusual bird deaths to state/federal officials, either through NDA by calling 1-877-800-4080 or through USDA's toll-free number at 1-866-536-7593.

As part of the existing USDA avian influenza response plans, federal and state partners as well as industry are following these five basic steps: 1) Quarantine – restricting movement of poultry and poultry-moving equipment into and out of the control area; 2) Eradicate – humanely euthanizing the affected flock(s); 3) Monitor region – testing wild and domestic birds in a broad area around the quarantine area; 4) Disinfect – kills the virus in the affected flock locations; and 5) Test – confirming that the poultry farm is AI virus-free.

Additional information on HPAI can be found online at www.nda.nebraska.gov. Information is available for producers, media and the general public.

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