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Poultry Returning to PA Fairs, Farm Show; State Urges Continued Vigilance against Avian Flu

Year-long ban lifted; Interstate quarantine orders remain in effect

Harrisburg, PA – Individuals visiting upcoming fairs and the 2017 Farm Show will have a chance to see and experience live poultry exhibits and competitions again. After a year-long suspension of avian activities at the state's 109 county fairs and the 2016 Pennsylvania Farm Show, state officials today announced the ban will be lifted June 1.

Instituted in May 2015, the ban was put in place as a precautionary measure to protect Pennsylvania's \$13 billion poultry industry against the threat of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, or HPAI, virus.

While avian activities will be allowed to resume, if a positive case is confirmed in Pennsylvania or a contiguous state, the ban will be reinstated immediately.

"We realize it was challenging for our exhibitors and visitors to have poultry missing from these events this last year," said Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding. "It was a difficult decision but the right decision to protect our state against the HPAI virus.

"Through the efforts of many, we're fortunate that Pennsylvania and the United States is not currently experiencing HPAI. This gives us the comfort level to lift the poultry ban," Redding noted. "The prospect of another outbreak is always there, which is why we have to remain vigilant, have flock plans in place and continue practicing good biosecurity measures."

Redding added that in conjunction with the lifting of the ban, the department is instituting new testing protocols to protect against the virus.

"As we continue work to keep the virus at bay, we have now instituted a 30-day testing protocol for entering poultry exhibits at county fairs," Redding said. "Previously, poultry had to test negative for Avian Influenza at least six months prior to the exhibit date. Now, per the fair guidance, poultry must be tested within the 30 days prior to the opening date of the exhibition."

Avian influenza, commonly known as "bird flu," is caused by an influenza type-A virus. Avian influenza viruses occur naturally in birds. Wild bird species (such as ducks, swans and geese) can carry the virus, but usually do not exhibit symptoms. Avian influenza diseases are very contagious and some strains can make domesticated birds (including chickens, ducks, quail, pheasants, guinea fowl and turkeys) very sick or even cause death. While low pathogenic avian influenza may not cause high mortality in a flock, the H5 and H7 subtypes have the capacity to mutate into highly pathogenic forms of the virus, which, when multiplied systemically in poultry, can often cause very high mortality in infected flocks.

A case of HPAI has not been detected since January 2016 when a strain of the H7N8 virus impacted a commercial turkey flock in Dubois County, Indiana. This differed from the H5N2

strain that caused the larger outbreaks in 2015. Since December 2014, the United States Department of Agriculture has confirmed cases of H5N2 in the Pacific, Central and Mississippi migratory bird paths. A case has not been found in the Atlantic Flyway.

The department recommends producers have flock plans in place that address risk mitigation, depopulation, disposal and cleaning and disinfection methods. Producers are also reminded of the importance of having a premises identification or ID. Premises identification numbers provide the department with a way to locate and contact producers in the event that HPAI is found within the state and to share any precautions the producer may need to take given the proximity of the exposure to their operation.

Last summer, the department issued two interstate quarantine orders which remain in effect. The first was established in June 2015, requiring poultry moving to live bird markets and eggs destined for a commercial breaking operation, from states with infected HPAI flocks, to meet 72-hour testing, paperwork and reporting requirements that certify the shipment tested negative for avian influenza. The second order requires that all vehicles, conveyances, containers and materials that transport poultry and related products be completely cleaned and disinfected using commercial truck washing equipment or other equivalent cleaning and disinfecting equipment prior to entry onto a new premises or poultry operation. There must be no visible buildups of manure or feathers before loading. Additionally, written documentation of cleaning and disinfection must be maintained.

If you see high mortality or disease in flocks, visit <http://extension.psu.edu/animals/poultry/small-poultry-flocks/getting-help> for assistance information.

For more information about HPAI, including biosecurity measures and premises registration, visit the department's website at www.agriculture.pa.gov and refer to the "Avian Influenza" box on the right side of the homepage. You can also call the department's Bureau of Animal Health and Diagnostic Services at 717-772-2852 or visit the Extension website at <http://extension.psu.edu/avian-influenza>.

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