TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION
Serving Texas Animal Agriculture Since 1893

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For Immediate Release
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Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Detected in Ellis County Birds

AUSTIN, TX – The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) and the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed the presence of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in a non-commercial mixed species backyard flock (non-poultry) in Ellis County, Texas.

Following the observation of sick birds and bird deaths in the flock, samples were tested at the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory and confirmed at the APHIS National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa on November 14, 2023.

The TAHC is working closely with federal animal health officials on a joint incident response. State officials quarantined the affected premises, and as part of existing avian influenza response plans, federal and state partners are working jointly on additional surveillance in areas around the affected flock.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the public health risk associated with these avian influenza detections remains low. As a reminder, the proper handling and cooking of all poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165˚F is recommended as a general food safety precaution.

"Since October 2023, there has been an uptick in HPAI detections across the country," said Dr. Lewis "Bud" Dinges, TAHC executive director and state veterinarian. "Protecting poultry health is a top priority in Texas. We strongly encourage poultry owners and producers to strengthen biosecurity practices and stay vigilant to prevent further spread of the virus."

Anyone involved with poultry production, from the small backyard to the large commercial producer, should review biosecurity activities to assure the health of flocks.

- Closely observe and report sudden increases in the number of sick birds or bird deaths to the TAHC at 1-800-550-8242 or APHIS 1-866-536-7593.
- Practice good biosecurity with poultry flocks.
- Prevent contact between domestic birds and wild birds.
- Consider bringing birds indoors to further prevent exposures.
- Avoid visits to other premises that also have birds.
- Find additional information on biosecurity for backyard flocks at https://www.tahc.texas.gov/news/brochures/TAHCBrochure_AI-BiosecurityPoultry.pdf.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- TAHC Poultry Health page: https://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/poultry/#AI

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- United States Detections of HPAI: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai
- USDA Defend the Flock biosecurity: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/defend-the-flock-program/dtf-resources/dtf-resources

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Avian influenza (AI) is caused by an influenza type A virus which can infect poultry (such as chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, domestic ducks, geese, and guinea fowl) and is carried by free flying waterfowl such as ducks, geese and shorebirds. AI viruses are classified by a combination of two groups of proteins: hemagglutinin or "H" proteins, of which there are 16 (H1–H16), and neuraminidase or "N" proteins, of which there are 9 (N1–N9). Many different combinations of "H" and "N" proteins are possible. Each combination is considered a different subtype and can be further broken down into different strains which circulate within flyways/geographic regions. AI viruses are further classified by their pathogenicity (low or high)—the ability of a particular virus strain to produce disease in domestic poultry.

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The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) was established in 1893 as the Livestock Sanitary Commission and charged with protecting the state's domestic animals "from all contagious or infectious diseases of a malignant character." TAHC remains true to this charge while evolving with the times to protect the health and marketability of all Texas livestock and poultry. Learn more about the TAHC by visiting www.tahc.texas.gov.