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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NDA ADVISES POULTRY OWNERS TO WATCH FOR AVIAN INFLUENZA**

**LINCOLN** –The Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) is advising poultry owners to protect their flocks against avian influenza by closely monitoring their birds for signs of the disease and by maintaining strict biosecurity practices. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is very contagious and can cause severe illness and/or sudden death in domestic birds. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has confirmed HPAI in commercial and/or backyard flocks in Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, New York and Virginia. To date, the virus has not been found in Nebraska.

“While we have not seen HPAI in Nebraska since 2015, protecting the health of poultry in the state is a top priority,” said State Veterinarian Dr. Roger Dudley. “It’s important for poultry owners to know about this disease, take the necessary steps to help prevent its spread, and protect Nebraska’s poultry industry.”

As part of existing avian influenza response plans, NDA is working alongside federal and state partners to monitor for the disease in commercial poultry operations, backyard poultry flocks, live bird markets and in migratory wild bird populations.

Symptoms of HPAI in poultry include: a decrease in water consumption; lack of energy and appetite; decreased egg production or soft-shelled, misshapen eggs; nasal discharge, coughing, sneezing; incoordination; and diarrhea. HPAI can also cause sudden death in birds even if they aren’t showing any other symptoms. HPAI can survive for weeks in contaminated environments.

Dudley is asking Nebraska poultry producers, large and small, to monitor their flocks for symptoms of HPAI, review and maintain their biosecurity activities, and notify NDA immediately if they suspect any problems. Bird owners should report unusual bird deaths or sick birds to NDA at 800-831-0550 or 402-471-2351, or through USDA at 866-536-7593.

Enhanced biosecurity helps prevent the introduction and spread of viruses and diseases including HPAI. NDA and USDA have resources available to help poultry owners step up their biosecurity efforts.

- Know the warning signs of infectious bird diseases like HPAI. Be on the lookout for unusual signs of behavior, severe illness and/or sudden deaths.

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- Restrict access to your property and poultry.
- Keep it clean. Wear clean clothes, scrub boots/shoes with disinfectant and wash hands thoroughly before and after contact with your flock.
- If you, your employees or family have been on other farms, or other places where there is livestock and/or poultry, clean and disinfect your vehicle tires and equipment before returning home.
- Don't share equipment, tools, or other supplies with other livestock or poultry owners.
- In addition to practicing good biosecurity, all bird owners should prevent contact between their birds and wild birds, making sure wild birds cannot access domestic poultry's feed and water sources.
- Report sick birds immediately to: NDA at 800-831-0550 or 402-471-2351; the USDA at 866-536-7593; or your veterinarian. Early detection is important to prevent the spread of disease.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the risk to people getting HPAI infections from birds is low. No human cases of avian influenza viruses have been detected in the United States.

All poultry entering Nebraska must be accompanied by a VS form 9-3 or Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI, or health certificate). If you are considering moving an animal into Nebraska from an affected state, please call 402-471-2351 to learn more. Nebraska poultry owners wanting to ship poultry out of state should consult the state veterinarians of the destination states for import requirements.

For more information about avian influenza, visit NDA's website at <https://nda.nebraska.gov/animal/avian/index.html> or the USDA's website <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/>. Additional information on biosecurity for backyard flocks can be found at <http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov>.

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