



Preparing for the Avian Flu *(and doing all you can to avoid it!)* By Jim Adkins

As most of you know, we have lost millions of poultry (primarily chickens and turkeys) due to the Avian Flu that has spread all across the United States, primarily in the Midwest! For many of our SPN certified flocks, it has not hit the southeast, the state of Ohio and it has been very limited in California. I am thankful that it has not hit any of our flocks!

There is great concern that it will hit the southern United States this fall. The reason for these concerns is the migrating birds that come from Canada back to the south! Most wild birds can be affected by high path avian flu. The natural reservoir for the virus seems to be migratory waterfowl, (ducks and geese). The wild migratory ducks and geese can be carriers and not be affected by the virus and can seem very healthy. In most cases found to date, the transmission seems to be flocks coming in contact with wild migratory water fowl.

If this strain of High Path Avian flu gets into a flock, the biggest telltale sign is a 70-90 percent death loss in first 2-3 days after exposure. This particular strain of avian flu has not affected humans to date.

Best thing to do over next few months is to keep your birds as *stress free as possible*. Some think that locking birds up (in confinement) will be the best protection – my concern with this line of thinking is the stress that is caused by confinement. Crowded birds are stressed birds! Yes, there is a risk with leaving the birds outside but my concern is “*breaking down of immune systems*” that is caused by stress.

While they are outside, it would be best to make sure that your poultry does not have access to any farm ponds or areas adjacent to farm ponds where ducks and geese have possibly defecated. May need to think about fencing your farm ponds out so your domestic birds do not have access to ponds or grass around ponds. If you have lots of access to water, I recommend you do all that you can to keep your pastured poultry away from the water. If you have ponds or water where migratory waterfowl may be visiting this fall, you may want to consider confining your birds.

Here are some additional bio-security steps that I highly recommend:

Top (10) Bio-security steps for your poultry enterprise: (for all the time!)

1. Wear certain clothes and boots only while tending your poultry and hatching area.
2. Clean boots and disinfect at the beginning and end of each to your poultry and hatching area.
3. Store feed out of reach of rodents and wild birds.
4. Do not allow other poultry (neighbors) to interact with your poultry.

5. Regularly clean and disinfect buildings, pens, equipment, incubators and hatching area.
6. Use common sense if you tend a poultry sale, market or auction.
7. Quarantine new birds for up to 30 days.
8. Limit traffic to your farm. (by foot and auto)
9. Breed for vigor and vitality – remember, this is what we do! Our commitment and goal is to breed strong birds who will fight this disease.

Specific Instructions that I encourage you to do for the remainder of 2015:

(Until you hear otherwise from us here at SPN!)

- I. Do not bring any new birds on your farm unless it is absolutely necessary! If it is necessary, make sure they come from NPIP tested flocks ONLY!
- II. Do not take your birds off your farm and “*bring them back!*” Do not attend any poultry shows, sales, swap meets etc.
- III. You should not visit other SPN farms without taking the same precautions as you would others!
- IV. **Most importantly:** Do everything you can to AVOID stress with your birds; things that create stress are:
 - Chasing your birds is stressful. Little kids chasing birds is stressful!
 - Allowing your birds to “*run out*” of feed and water is stressful!
 - Changing feeds causes stress for your birds. If you need to change feeds, do it gradually.
 - Weather changes cause stress; as the temperatures increase this summer, make sure your birds have plenty of water and shade!
 - Crowded space causes stress!
 - Predators cause stress; make sure your birds are protected!

Note: Call your local officials if you have sick birds and be prepared to take sick birds to the closest diagnostic laboratory.

If you have any concerns or think that something may be going wrong with your flock, please feel free to contact me or your SPN coach. We are here to serve you and do all we can to help!

Revised: June 16, 2015

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