

AG NOTES
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FARMERS MARKET

There seems to have been some confusion on the farmers market last week. We were open as usual, but there was only one vendor with any volume of produce, and unfortunately, he was delayed in getting there. He will be back and all of the other vendors are still welcome to come. He had a good supply and a good variety, and his late green beans are coming in now.

The market is on Thursday afternoons at 2:30 at the pavilion next to the big blue water tower at the Celebration Grounds.

AVIAN INFLUENZA

There was a positive case of highly pathogenic avian influenza diagnosed last week in West Tennessee. This is a very devastating disease among poultry and wild fowl, and it is of great concern for us in this county with our poultry complex and the many farmers who have commercial flocks, as well as our many small farm flocks. The outbreak in West Tennessee was such a farm flock, and they all had to be disposed of.

Here is information from our state veterinarian, Dr. Samantha Beaty, our UT poultry specialist Dr. Tom Table, and our UT Extension Veterinarian, Dr. Lew Strickland.

Dr. Beaty's comments were "HPAI is known to be deadly for domesticated fowl. It's critical we move quickly to stop the virus from spreading and we need your help to minimize the risk. We are working closely with our federal and state partners to coordinate resources and response, and we are following strict protocols for quarantine, testing, disposal, cleaning, disinfection, and monitoring.

For now, any events where poultry can congregate are prohibited. That includes poultry shows, exhibitions, livestock sales, flea markets, and swap meets.

Although HPAI does not pose a food safety risk, no infected poultry will be allowed to enter the food supply. Poultry and eggs are safe to eat when handled and cooked properly. The risk of human infection with avian influenza during poultry outbreaks is very low. In fact, no transmission to humans was reported during the outbreak that affected commercial poultry farms in Tennessee in 2017.

Owners of backyard and commercial poultry flocks are encouraged to closely observe domesticated birds and report a sudden increase in the number of sick birds or bird deaths to my office by calling 615-837-5120 or by calling USDA at 1-866-536-7593."

Dr. Tabler and Dr. Strickland passed on these security recommendations. (I did omit those about shows and sales since this is banned in Tennessee for a time.) Obviously, the commercial operations will follow the guidelines issued by their complex. But these recommendations are for everyone, especially the farm-flock operators. Prevent direct transmission (this is especially critical for backyard poultry keepers. Do not mix multiple species, particularly waterfowl and chickens, or ages. Do not allow your flock contact with wild birds (difficult if you free-range) or wild bird droppings. Prevent indirect contact. Post "No Visitors" and "Restricted Area" signs at road entrance to farm (particularly for commercial operations).

Have dedicated clothing and footwear for use when working in/near your flock. If one of your birds becomes sick or dies, do not move the other birds offsite to a different farm, even if they appear healthy. Flock exposure has already occurred. Maintain an effective rodent control program (rodents can carry many diseases). Do not allow visitors access to your birds and do not visit other poultry farms. Essential visitors should wear disposable coveralls, boots and headgear; multi-house farms should

practice this between individual houses. Backyard producers should clean and disinfect feeders and drinkers every day.

Clean/disinfect all coops, crates and other poultry containers or equipment before and after use. Use plastic or metal, not wood; wood is difficult to effectively clean. Do not keep feeders or other sources of food for wild birds on your property. Use sound deterrents to keep wild birds from roosting on your property. Dispose of dead birds in an approved manner (composting, incineration, burial). When possible, cover pens and vents and openings in the poultry house or coop with narrow-mesh wire screen to keep out wild birds.

Monitor all vehicles entering the farm to determine if they have been properly cleaned and disinfected, including the tires and undercarriage. Do not share equipment with friends or neighbors. If you do, make sure equipment is clean and disinfected when it leaves and before it comes back. Purchase feed from a trusted source; keep it safe from wild birds and rodents. Use foot baths and hand sanitizers. Wash hands and arms after caring for birds. Bird-and varmint-proof your coop, pens and houses. Keep poultry houses securely locked; lock from inside while working inside.

Report sick birds. If you suspect a problem, say something immediately. Don't wait for things to get worse. Sick and dying birds should be submitted to a diagnostic laboratory for proper diagnosis of the problem. Normal, everyday mortality should not be reported as it will only slow officials attempting to determine actual disease status. However, any drastic change in health status or mortality in the flock should be reported. Early reporting is vital to protect your flock and the Tennessee poultry industry.

If you are a commercial producer, contact your service tech for guidance and assistance at the first sign of a potential disease issue. If you are a backyard producer, contact your local county Extension agent (931-684-5971), your local veterinarian, Tennessee State Veterinarian's Office (615-837-5120), or Middle Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center (931-486-2129) and ask for the poultry specialist.