

Kansas Department of Agriculture Monitoring For Signs Of Avian Influenza

The Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) is currently monitoring a control zone in Southeast Kansas, including areas of Cherokee and Crawford counties, after a confirmed case of the H5N2 strain of Avian Influenza was found in Jasper County, Missouri near Asbury.

Avian Influenza is a contagious, rapidly spreading viral disease affecting birds. Outbreaks of a strain of avian influenza have occurred in Missouri, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington and Idaho and are not considered to be a threat to public health or the food supply.

Dr. Bill Brown, State Animal Health Commissioner, confirmed that a response team from KDA's Division of Animal Health and from USDA has been dispatched to the area to conduct surveillance activities. "It is important to know where backyard flocks of poultry exist. We have also been in contact with commercial poultry farmers in the region." Avian Influenza exists naturally in many wild birds and can be transmitted by contact with infected animals or ingestion of infected food or water.

"We are dedicated to providing the necessary assistance and precautions to avoid any possible spreading of the disease," Brown said. Symptoms in poultry include coughing, sneezing, respiratory distress, decreased egg production and sudden death.

KDA is seeking assistance from backyard poultry owners in the Crawford and Cherokee County Regions. If you currently own poultry, the agency is requesting you self-report your backyard flock. This will assist animal health officials in helping to monitor the situation and control the spread of this disease. If you own poultry, please contact the KDA Division of Animal Health at 785-564-6601.

Though extremely rare, humans can contract Avian Influenza. It is thought that infection results from contact with contaminated poultry or surfaces. Symptoms range from flu-like symptoms to eye infections, pneumonia, and acute respiratory distress. If you have symptoms and believe that you have come into contact with infected animals or consumed infected meat, contact your health care provider immediately.

If you suspect your flock has contracted the disease, quarantine the affected animals immediately. Also, be sure to restrict traffic on and off your farm and thoroughly disinfect any material leaving the farm such as tires, equipment and clothing. No effective treatment for the disease has been found. Infected animals must be humanely destroyed and disposed of properly to prevent the disease from spreading.

Although vaccines are available, they are not commonly used because no vaccine covers all 15 strains of the disease. For additional information, please contact the Kansas Department of Agriculture. Prevention is the best way to combat Avian Influenza. Keep wild birds away from your home or farm, and stay informed about the health of neighboring animals.

For more information please check www.agriculture.ks.gov/avianinfluenza