

July 15, 2022

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Update and Biosecurity Advisory (Outdoor Access Exemption Request)

To: California Organic Certifiers

The risk of disease entering domestic poultry flocks is always present but can be mitigated through actions that interrupt disease transmission (biosecurity). Enhanced biosecurity is critical in the face of ongoing disease outbreaks and wild bird carrier exposure. While we were hoping to see reduced risk to California poultry relative to highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) this summer as case counts in domestic poultry continue to go down across the nation, it appears that risk from infected wild birds continues to be elevated in our region. During the past few days, the Eurasian strain H5N1 was detected in wild birds in Northern California (Glenn and Colusa Counties) and in a backyard flock near Carson City, Nevada. These are the first detections of H5N1 in these states this year. Wild birds in or passing through California are facing the additional stressor of drought which is forcing unusual congregation and movement. Based on current disease surveillance and epidemiology, wild waterfowl and raptors remain the largest threat of Eurasian H5N1 introduction to domestic poultry in California. Continued reports of the current HPAI strain findings are particularly concerning because of the similarities to the spread of HPAI H5N1 in Europe where the virus continued to spill over into domestic poultry beyond a single migration period.

To protect California flocks, we have once again requested that poultry producers separate their poultry from wild birds if possible. This action is particularly important if there is ANY water in the vicinity that may attract and congregate wild waterfowl. We recommend housing poultry inside and discouraging any interaction with wild birds, particularly migrating or resident waterfowl and raptors.

Because of the recent cases near California poultry production and epidemiologic evidence that this strain, given the California drought, will concentrate in resident and migrating waterfowl and raptors looking for food and water sources, **we ask that Organic Certifiers permit California producers to move their birds indoors through December 2022**; and exempt the outdoor access requirement to remain certified during this time. Over the next several months we will continue to assess the threat and rescind this recommendation if the situation changes. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. Thank you for your cooperation.

For more information about Avian Influenza, please visit:
www.cdfa.ca.gov/go/avianinfluenza

Sincerely,

Dr. Annette Jones
State Veterinarian
California Department of Food and Agriculture

