

September 14, 2022

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) 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 HPAI this summer, in the past month we detected our first cases of the Eurasian strain H5N1 in both wild and domestic birds. As of September 14, 2022, there have been 14 detections of HPAI in domestic flocks of birds and 45 detections in wild birds in 16 counties in California. 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 continue to request 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 in 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. We will continue to assess the threat over the next couple of months 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

