



Worthwhile Operational Guidelines & Suggestions

BROILER PROCESSING TIMELY INFORMATION – OCTOBER 2005

AVIAN INFLUENZA (ASIAN BIRD FLU)

The potential for increased human-to-human transmission of avian influenza (Bird Flu) is a concern of public health officials. According to the American Association of Avian Pathologists (aaap@uga.edu) and the American College of Poultry Veterinarians (acpv@vet.upenn.edu), the US has the safeguards in place to preclude the outbreak of Bird Flu, such as the epidemic occurring in the Southeast Asia. The H5N1 designation of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) comes from the arrangement of proteins on the surface of the virus. In addition to HPAI and its many strains, there are also Low Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (LPAI) strains. Whenever, LPAI or HPAI has been encountered in the past, the infected poultry flocks are humanely destroyed and disposed of through environmentally sound methods.

Monitoring and surveillance for avian influenza, banning importation of birds and bird products from the infected parts of the world, as well as strict importation controls are first line of defenses for the regulatory agencies. Traditionally, the avian influenza has not been considered to be a virus that can be spread from birds to people (a zoonotic infection). Although many workers and soldiers have been involved in the eradication of the diseased chickens, ducks and other birds in the Southeast Asia, only a very small number of people, who were in direct contact with live, infected poultry, have developed the human form of the disease. The virus lives in the respiratory and digestive systems of the birds and spreads through respiratory moisture and decal material. Human-to-human transmission, apparently possible, is considered extremely rare.

Virtually all chicken and turkeys sold in the US is domestically produced. However, commingling free-roaming, “backyard birds” or small flocks of poultry with wild birds and other animal species should be stopped. There is no danger of acquiring Bird Flu from properly cooked poultry and poultry products. Standard bio-security and sanitation protocols should be enforced in the processing plant (i.e., washing and sanitizing hands after contact with live poultry or raw poultry products) to reduce the likelihood of any food-related disease outbreaks.



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