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How Ohio Would Respond to an Outbreak of Avian Influenza in Birds

In the event of an outbreak of avian influenza in Ohio, the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA), in conjunction with USDA, will operate under the Animal Disease Incident Annex, which provides for quick and effective containment of any disease outbreak. ODA is responsible for quarantining facilities and disposal of animals during any animal disease outbreak, including avian influenza.

General Background

Avian Influenza, or “bird flu,” is a virus that can cause a varying amount of disease among birds. The viruses can infect chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, geese, and ducks as well as a variety of other birds. Highly pathogenic avian influenza causes a severe, extremely contagious illness and death among infected birds, and while some strains could be infectious to people, the chance of infected poultry entering the food chain would be extremely low.

Ohio Animal Disease Response Plan

The Animal Disease Incident Annex is part of the State of Ohio Emergency Operations Plan. It addresses emergency management responsibilities for state-level organizations in the event of an animal disease outbreak that requires actions beyond the capabilities of the Ohio Department of Agriculture’s Animal Industry Division and may require a declaration of emergency by the governor. The primary goal is to coordinate state and federal efforts to prevent, stop and eliminate the spread of animal disease, and minimize the human and economic impact of the disease.

Collaboration

While the Ohio Department of Agriculture has primary authority to manage animal disease outbreaks in Ohio through Chapter 941 of the Ohio Revised Code, there may be events that require many additional resources, such as those performed by other state, federal and local agencies, private businesses, and industry organizations. ODA and these organizations coordinate emergency response and communications before, during, and after an animal disease incident and make up the teams dispatched during an animal disease emergency.

Support agencies include the Ohio Adjutant General’s Department; Ohio Attorney General’s Office; Ohio Departments of Administrative Services, Health, Mental Health, Natural Resources, Public Safety, and Transportation; Ohio Environmental Protection Agency; Ohio Livestock Coalition; Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Extension; Ohio Veterinary Medical Association and Ohio Veterinary Medical Licensing Board; Federal Emergency Management Agency; U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Service, Wildlife Services, Regional Emergency Animal Disease Eradication Organizations, Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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Concept of Operations

The Animal Disease Incident Annex establishes a unified command system at the site of the emergency and uses Crisis Action System levels to designate activities that will take place in the event of imminent or actual hazards affecting the State of Ohio. Employees receive training in the National Incident Management System.

Support Teams

The Animal Disease Incident Annex establishes the following teams to coordinate animal disease response and recovery:

Public Information	Surveillance
Indemnification/Appraisal	Euthanasia
Disposal	Decontamination
Biosecurity Training	Veterinary Support
Quarantine	Law Enforcement Support
Recovery	

Putting it to Practice

The Ohio Department of Agriculture regularly tests the functions of the Animal Disease Incident Annex. It has done this through facilitated discussions, tabletop exercises, and full-scale functional exercises. The success of the plan depends on implementation through exercises and real-life situations. It is formal enough to provide direction and structure, but flexible enough to allow for quick decision-making when circumstances cannot be predicted.

Consumers may call ODA at 800-282-1955 with questions or concerns, or visit one of these web sites:

- State of Ohio Flu Web site – www.ohiopandemicflu.gov
- Ohio Department of Agriculture – www.ohioagriculture.gov/avian
- U.S. Department of Agriculture – www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/birdbiosecurity/ or www.usda.gov/birdflu
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/
- Ohio Poultry Association – www.ohiopoultry.org
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – www.pandemicflu.gov