Avian Influenza Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is Avian Influenza?

A: Avian Influenza is a respiratory illness that affects avian species or birds.

Q: Are there levels of Avian Influenza?

A: Avian Influenza type-A viruses can be designated as highly pathogenic (HPAI) or low pathogenic (LPAI) depending on the severity of the illness and the exact strain of the virus. The types of Avian Influenza of most concern in avian species are H5 and H7 which are automatically designated as highly pathogenic.

Q: Is Avian Influenza a food safety concern?

A: Avian influenza is not a food safety concern because animals with Avian Influenza – or those exposed to Avian Influenza – do not enter the food supply. As an additional safeguard, the Avian Influenza virus is easily destroyed by heat.

Q: What are the challenges for the poultry industry?

A: Wild birds, in particular waterfowl, can be a natural reservoir for Avian Influenza. Poultry flocks are also susceptible to avian influenza.

Q: What are the safeguards against Avian Influenza regarding the food supply?

A: Avian Influenza is identifiable in poultry flocks and those flocks never enter the food supply. There are strict controls about biosecurity and the movement of any flocks suspected of having Avian Influenza or being in close proximity to a flock with Avian Influenza.

Q: What is the poultry industry doing to prevent Avian Influenza in this country?

A: Avian Influenza is a serious illness for avian species and a serious animal health concern for veterinarians and farmers. The poultry industry, animal health experts, and regulatory officials from State and Federal agencies are experienced in dealing with Avian Influenza outbreaks in poultry flocks and eradicating the disease.

Additional Questions? Please contact Dr. Hilary Thesmar: hthesmar@fmi.org or 202-220-0658

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