Avian Influenza: Talking Points

The following points are intended to address the most likely questions that food retailers and their consumers may have about Avian Influenza.

- Food safety is the top priority of the food retail industry. Our reputation and business viability relies upon our customer’s faith in the safety of the products we sell.

- There are two prominent lines of defense guarding against human exposure to Avian Influenza (AI) through the food supply.
  - According to USDA, once identified, birds with Avian influenza (AI) or exposed to AI are immediately quarantined and do not enter the food supply, therefore AI is not a food safety concern.
  - Additionally, the AI virus is easily destroyed by heat. The proper handling and cooking of poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165 °F destroys the AI virus. The World Health Organization reports that there is no evidence that the disease can be spread to people through properly cooked food.

- There are many forms of AI, the strain H5N2 – the variety currently being found in the Mississippi Flyway, with cases reported in Minnesota, Missouri and Arkansas- is considered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to be of low risk to people.

Please contact Dr. Hilary Thesmar, vice president FMI food safety programs, at hthesmar@fmi.org or 202-220-0658 for any additional assistance.