



*The University of Georgia*  
**Cooperative Extension Service**  
*College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences / Athens, Georgia 30602-4356*

MAY 2006



## ***BROILER TIP . . .***

### **GEORGIA'S PROGRAM FOR RESPONDING TO LOW PATH AVIAN INFLUENZA**

Avian influenza is a contagious viral disease of poultry that can produce serious health problems for flocks and can also have serious economic consequences for poultry producers. Mild forms of this disease occur occasionally around the world and are known as Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI). The more serious forms of this disease are referred to as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) because the disease is more severe in infected birds and often results in high mortality. Low pathogenic forms of avian influenza (H5 and H7) are known to change to highly pathogenic forms, so it is important to eliminate these viruses from flocks before they have the chance to mutate into more serious forms. In order to respond quickly and effectively to an outbreak of avian influenza, it is important to have a rapid response plan in place before the disease occurs. Representatives from the Georgia poultry industry, the Georgia Department of Agriculture, USDA Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service, and poultry veterinarians from the Georgia Poultry Laboratory Network and the University of Georgia Poultry Diagnosis and Research Center have recently developed an emergency response plan for controlling an outbreak of this disease. This plan addresses the organizational structure that will direct emergency actions and details the steps that will be used to control and eliminate low path avian influenza should an outbreak occur in Georgia. The full plan is lengthy and comprehensive and subject to change as needed, but the key components are summarized below:

Current Surveillance Programs for avian influenza (AI) in Georgia. A comprehensive program for monitoring and surveillance of poultry is being conducted on a daily bases in Georgia. This program includes blood testing in the field for all commercial flocks in Georgia as well as the operation of primary breeders and hatching egg producers as AI Clean. In addition, all live birds submitted to Georgia poultry diagnostic laboratories are tested for AI and auction and sales birds are regularly sampled and tested for the presence AI.

**Initial Response.** A confirmed case of avian influenza (AI) will be reported immediately to the State Veterinarian who will put the infected premise under quarantine and will call for an immediate meeting of the *Poultry Emergency Disease Committee* (PEDC). Infected birds will be disposed of immediately by an approved euthanasia and disposal procedure. The primary method of euthanasia for large flocks is CO<sub>2</sub> utilizing a variety of procedures depending on the type of bird and the size of flock to be destroyed. Cervical dislocation may be used for small flocks. Disposal methods include burial, composting, burning to ash, incineration, rendering, or any other method approved by the Commissioner of Agriculture.

#### **PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK**

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State College, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating.  
The Cooperative Extension service officers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability  
An equal opportunity/affirmative action organization committed to a diverse work force..

**Organizational Structure.** An incident command structure has been set up for avian influenza similar to the incident command system that would be used for any catastrophic event. The *Poultry Emergency Disease Committee* (PEDC) composed of poultry industry representatives from the various industry segments including broilers, primary breeders, commercial layers, and poultry veterinarians from the Georgia Poultry Laboratory Network, the University of Georgia Poultry Diagnostic and Research Center, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the State Department of Agriculture will work together to implement and direct the response plan. Once the incident command system is activated through a confirmed case of LPAI, the PEDC will have responsibility for directing the necessary operations to control and eliminate the disease.

**Establishment of movement restriction zones.** The PEDC will establish 2, 6 and 20 mile movement restriction zones around the infected premises. Birds or eggs will not be moved from these zones without blood testing for AI. Once these zones are established, all house clean out and litter spreading will stop. In addition all service activity for farms in these zones will stop. All assemblages of poultry (auctions, fairs, flea markets, etc.) will be cancelled all across Georgia. Wash stations will be set up at the edge of the 6 mile zone. All poultry vehicles leaving the 6 mile zone will have to be cleaned and disinfected (C&D).

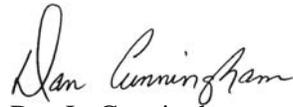
**Conditions for release from quarantine.** Quarantined farms will be considered for release 30 days after C&D is complete and swabs have tested negative to virus isolation within two weeks of release.

**Restocking of depopulated farms.** The goal is to have no repopulation within the 6 mile zone until 30m days after the last positive case has been dealt with. In the case of a non commercial break, restocking will be at the PEDC's discretion.

**Indemnity programs.** Georgia is working on an industry indemnity program where companies will pledge an amount of money for depopulation and disposal for the first few positive flocks that would be proportional to their poultry ownership in Georgia. USDA is working on getting 100% indemnity for states that participate in the NPIP AI monitoring program and that have accepted Low Path AI containment and first response plan. Non participants would receive only 25% indemnity.

**Use of vaccines.** Georgia will consider vaccination in some extreme circumstances where very large numbers of confined poultry would be found positive such as commercial layers. Georgia will consider using vaccine as a means towards eradication, but NOT as an only control method.

Members of the poultry industry in Georgia and the various state agencies have developed a plan that will provide for rapid detection and response should an outbreak of LPAI occur. Should an outbreak of highly pathogenic AI occur, response to the incidence will be directed by federal authorities based on the National Response Plan developed by USDA and APHIS.



Dan L. Cunningham  
Extension Coordinator

Extension County Coordinator/Agent

\*Consult with your poultry company representative before making management changes.\*  
"Your local County Extension Agent is a source of more information on this subject"