

Question and Answer
June 5, 2015

On June 1, after much deliberation and consideration, and in consultation with the Michigan Association for Fairs and Exhibitions, Michigan 4-H leadership and the Michigan Allied Poultry Industry, the State Veterinarian, Dr. James Averill, made the difficult decision to cancel all 2015 poultry and waterfowl exhibitions in Michigan this season. The following is a list of questions that people may have about the cancellation, avian influenza and options for Michigan's youth poultry exhibitors to allow them to have alternatives to the traditional exhibition experience.

Cancellation of Poultry Shows

1) Why did Michigan Department of Agricultural and Rural Development (MDARD) decide to cancel all poultry shows in 2015 when we don't have any cases of avian flu?

Avian influenza has been found in Wisconsin, Indiana, and the Province of Ontario as well as a number of other states. This is the largest HPAI outbreak ever for the United States poultry industry. Our goal is to protect all poultry – backyard and commercial - in Michigan with these actions.

2) What does this cancellation include?

All 2015 poultry and waterfowl exhibitions in Michigan. This means the comingling of birds from different locations in situations such as shows, exhibitions, swap meets, petting zoos at fairs, game bird and waterfowl fair displays and Miracle of Life exhibits. This does not include permanent poultry exhibits at zoos.

3) What is a swap meet?

A poultry swap meet is a location where people bring birds together for the day to buy, sell or trade.

4) Does this cancellation include market birds at the fair?

This includes chickens and turkeys brought to the fair for a meat bird show. While those birds could still be raised and processed, they may not be exhibited live.

5) Can birds be taken to a collection point and transported to slaughter?

Yes, birds can be collected at a location and transported to a processor. The Department reminds poultry owners to practice strict biosecurity steps to reduce chances of virus being taken back home.

6) Are birds able to be sold at livestock markets and/or live bird markets?

Yes, livestock auction markets that are licensed with MDARD are exempt from this requirement. "Live bird markets" means a market that receives live birds and that are slaughtered and processed for the buyer

7) Are eggs able to be exhibited?

Yes, eggs can be exhibited. MDARD recommends that eggs are washed and placed in new egg crate and all material be disposed of at the end of the fair/show.

8) Does this cancellation include racing pigeon events?

Yes. If birds are brought together from multiple sources and then return home, these events are included.

9) What about petting zoos at farms?

A petting zoo that has a display in an area where there are NO other poultry is allowed. Permanent zoos and exhibits are not part of this ban.

10) Is private sale of poultry and/or eggs allowed under the cancellation?

Yes. The movement and sale of private poultry, eggs has not been stopped. This includes movement to processors.

11) Why can't the kids bring in their meat birds for the day, do showmanship, have them judged, auctioned and then have them taken to market the next day?

Unfortunately, even if the birds are sold at market and not brought home, the biosecurity risk still exists. If there are other birds at home, for example, a human might pick up the disease from someone else's birds and carry the germs back to their own flock, which could have devastating results. In addition, avian influenza may pose a risk to other types of animals as well, so bringing the birds to the fair could expose other fair animals (such as swine) to this deadly disease. As a result, the safest option for all types of animals is to keep the poultry projects home.

12) Do poultry being taken to the processor for slaughter need to be pullorum tested?

No, they do not.

13) How is "commingling" defined as in regards to the cancellation?

Commingling means bringing birds together from multiple sources.

14) When there was concern for swine flu, shows were not canceled, so why cancel poultry shows for bird flu?

Avian Influenza is having an unprecedented impact nationwide. The disease is leading to high death loss and there is no clear answer on why large geographic distribution and impact to so many birds. Therefore MDARD took steps with avian influenza and did not in previous situations.

MDARD's Role:

MDARD's role is to protect and promote animal health. This is why the difficult decision was made to cancel all poultry exhibitions.

1) Are there cases of Avian Influenza in Michigan?

There have been no cases of avian influenza reported in Michigan. The cancellation of poultry exhibitions is a proactive measure intended to help keep Michigan's poultry healthy.

2) How many birds/farms have been affected by Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza?

More than 44.5 million birds have been affected in the United States with this particular outbreak of avian influenza. There have been over 200 cases in 20 states and the province of Ontario, Canada.

3) What is Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, how is it spread?

Highly Pathogenic Avian influenza is a virus infecting domestic poultry, such as chickens, turkeys, quail, and geese and may be carried by migrating waterfowl. This particular outbreak is a “high pathogenicity” type of avian influenza that is more deadly to poultry.

This avian influenza is spread through droppings or nasal discharge of an infected bird, which contaminates dust and soil. In addition people can carry the virus on their shoes, clothes, equipment and vehicles. This virus has also been spread by migrating birds.

4) How can we protect our backyard/hobby/show flocks from the spread of avian influenza?

Increasing your biosecurity practices including limiting the exposure to wild birds and restricting outdoor access to your flock will help protect your birds.

Some biosecurity practices include, but aren't limited to:

- Disinfecting when going in between coops; washing hands is important
- Not sharing equipment with other farmers or in between coops
- Washing and disinfecting equipment between uses
- Disinfecting boots and other gear when moving in between coops
- Using well water or municipal water as drinking water for birds; poultry should not be allowed to drink surface water because it potentially could be contaminated with AI
- Keeping poultry feed secure so that there is no contact between feed/feed ingredients and wild birds or rodents
- Prevent contact between wild birds and domestic birds

5) Can people/kids get sick from avian influenza?

This particular outbreak is being caused by an avian influenza virus with no detected human infections and the CDC considers the risk to people from this virus to be low. Influenza viruses have the potential of spreading to other species or people and are being carefully monitored.

6) Is it safe to eat poultry and eggs?

Yes. This is not a food safety concern and no birds infected with avian influenza will enter the food chain. As a food safety reminder, all poultry and eggs should be handled properly, such as washing your hands, and cooked to an internal temperature of 165° F.

7) What do I do if one of my birds is acting sick?

If your backyard poultry flock has a high death loss or consistent pattern of death loss in a short period of time, report it to MDARD at 800-292-3939; (after hours emergencies) 517-373-0440. Michigan residents who notice the death loss of three or more WILD birds should report it to DNR at 517-336-5030.

What will 2015 look like for youth?

MSU Extension and Michigan 4-H have established recommendations for alternatives to showing live birds so that exhibitors can showcase their knowledge and skills. These alternatives were reviewed and approved by MDARD and MAFE. The following are questions to help exhibitions and exhibitors find good options for this fair season.

1) Who can I talk to about my 4-H project?

Contact your county 4-H program coordinator for details on your county project.

2) What do I do with my birds?

Michigan 4-H has developed alternatives for showmanship, breed and broiler projects. Each alternative allows for exhibitors to display their skills and projects without the use of live birds.

3) Where can I find alternative ideas for incorporating my poultry project knowledge into fair?

These alternatives can be found by visiting the MSU Extension website at msue.msu.edu/poultryshows.

4) What if I have already entered my project for the county fair? What do I do?

Each county fair will institute their own alternatives, please contact your local county fair office for next steps and policies.

5) What about next year's fairs and exhibits, how long with the cancellation last?

MDARD will make decisions about next year's fair season based on how the HPAI event in the United States progresses. It is our goal to allow poultry exhibits as soon as the risk is lowered.

6) What do we do with empty poultry barns at fair?

Empty barns at fair should be sanitized and filled with poultry educational exhibits and some of the educational activities suggested in the alternative ideas from Michigan 4-H. Michigan 4-H will also be developing signage to help exhibition talk to the public about the cancellation of live poultry exhibitions.

7) Will processors take birds?

This cancellation does not affect the auctions, markets or processors.