Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

**Background**
HPAI H5 was identified in British Columbia, Canada in commercial turkey and backyard chicken flocks in November 2014. In December 2014, HPAI H5 was reported for the first time in the U.S and involved the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and California. The first detection in Minnesota was reported in March 2015 in a commercial turkey flock. Outbreaks have continued to occur and now involve several states in central and western U.S. HPAI infections have been reported in domestic poultry (backyard and commercial flocks), and wild birds.

**What is Avian Influenza?**
- Avian Influenza (“bird flu”) is a viral disease found in chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks, geese, guinea fowl, and many wild birds
- Avian influenza strains are classified into two categories, based on their ability to cause disease in birds:
  - Low Pathogenic (LPAI) forms commonly occur in wild birds and causes little to no sickness
  - Highly Pathogenic (HPAI) cause severe clinical signs in poultry and is often fatal

**What animals besides birds can get HPAI?**
Some strains of the virus can affect a number of animals including, pigs, cats, horses, dogs and ferrets.

**How is HPAI spread?**
Avian influenza is most commonly spread among birds by direct contact with the fecal droppings or respiratory secretions of infected birds. Other less likely ways for the virus to spread can include indirect exposure through contaminated soil, dust, shoes, clothing or equipment.

**What should poultry producers and backyard flock owners watch for?**
- Decreased food consumption, huddling, depression, closed eyes
- Respiratory signs, such as coughing and sneezing
- Decreased egg production, watery greenish diarrhea, excessive thirst
- Swollen wattles and combs
- High mortality and sudden death

**What measures should I take to ensure my flock remains healthy?**
- Limit, monitor, and record any movement of people, vehicles, or animals on or off your farm.
- Keep your flock away from wild or migratory birds, especially waterfowl.
- If contact with sick birds is necessary, wear protective clothing (disposable gloves, mask, coveralls, and boots).
- Use strict biosecurity measures such as cleaning and disinfection of bird housing facilities as well as rodent control measures
- Wash and disinfect items going on and off your farm, such as footwear, vehicles and equipment.
- If you suspect avian influenza is present in your flock, isolate any ill animals and contact your veterinarian and the Board of Animal Health immediately.

**Can humans be infected with HPAI H5?**
The CDC considers the risk to people from these HPAI H5 infections in wild birds, backyard flocks and commercial poultry, to be low. No human infections with the virus have been detected at this time. While human infections are possible, infection with avian influenza viruses is rare and – when they occur – these viruses do not spread easily between people. There is no evidence that humans can acquire avian influenza by eating properly cooked poultry products.

**What precautions can I take?**
- Avoid contact with sick/dead poultry. If contact occurs, wash your hands with soap and water and change clothing before touching healthy domestic poultry or other birds.
- If you suspect influenza in your animals, contact your veterinarian immediately.
- Your veterinarian can contact the Minnesota Board of Animal Health if he/she suspects influenza.
If I come into contract with wild birds while hunting or if I need to remove a dead bird, what additional precautions do I need to take?

- Keep in mind that apparently healthy birds can still carry pathogens.
- Practice good hand hygiene after handling wild birds or birds that are sick or dead.
- Use rubber or latex gloves when handling birds.
- If you find a dead bird, place it in a plastic bag and dispose in the garbage.

**Additional Information:**
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Minnesota Board of Animal Health – Poultry
- Minnesota Department of Health – Avian Influenza

*This fact sheet is meant to provide basic information. For specific health concerns please contact your physician or veterinarian. Updated April 2015.*