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**Penn State Extension Offers Resources for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)
and Educational Opportunities for Mental Health Awareness**

Lancaster, PA.— April 2022 – Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) viruses have been detected in commercial poultry flocks, backyard poultry flocks, and in wild waterfowl. Penn State faculty members and extension educators are serving on a statewide avian flu task force chaired by Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary. The group has developed action plans and procedures related to biosecurity; depopulation and disposal of infected flocks; issues relevant to small or backyard flocks; and other concerns.

Poultry owners, whether you have one bird or one million birds, should be on high alert. Now is the time to review your biosecurity plans. If possible, keep your birds indoors to prevent contact with wild birds. Have dedicated clothes and footwear that you only use when interacting with your flock. Clean and disinfect all tools and equipment used in and around your flock. Keep visitors to a minimum and make sure to ask about their exposure to wild and domestic birds before allowing them to interact with your flock. Now is the time to revisit your biosecurity plan. If you do not have a biosecurity plan, it's not too late to start. Preventing the introduction and spread of this devastating disease is essential. While you are working on your biosecurity plan, here are a few key biosecurity practices to implement immediately:

- Keep your poultry away from other birds
- Immediately clean up feed spills to discourage wild birds on your premises
- Limit visitors to only those essential for business. Make sure all visitors follow your biosecurity plan
- Wear dedicated footwear and clothing while servicing your poultry to minimize spreading the virus. Sanitize boots, hands, and tools before entering and after leaving your flock premises.

If you need assistance developing a biosecurity plan, you can visit Penn State Extension's Avian Influenza webpage: <https://extension.psu.edu/avian-influenza>. To stay informed of the avian influenza situation in the US you can visit the USDA APHIS avian influenza webpage. Finally, if you suspect your flock has been exposed to the HPAI virus, please call the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture at 717-772-2852.

The HPAI outbreak of 2014-2015 cost the USDA between \$1-2 billion dollars to clean -up. Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture estimates a major outbreak of HPAI in Pennsylvania could have an economic impact of \$13 billion. Potentially affecting over 50,000 jobs and \$3.2 billion in wages. PA ranks 4th in the nation in egg production and produces 8.2 billion eggs worth \$478 million annually. PA also has significant meat chicken, turkey, gamebird and vaccine egg production as well that would be affected.

During this time of potential increased stress, Penn State Extension is bringing awareness of mental health concerns to our communities with your help. Neighbors Helping Neighbors – being informed.

This can be accomplished with Penn State Extension educational opportunities for mental health awareness. We

have classes in Mental Health First Aid, Weathering the Storm, Communicating with Farmers Under Stress, and Mending Fences. All these courses can be delivered in several formats and adjusted to meet the needs of your group. When you attend any or all these classes, you learn how to understand your role in noticing signs in the people around you, listening to them, and using appropriate words to be encouraging and supportive.

extension.psu.edu/mental-health-first-aid-webinars

extension.psu.edu/weathering-the-storm-in-agriculture-how-to-cultivate-a-productive-mindset

extension.psu.edu/communicating-with-farmers-under-stress

The mental health program team lead for Penn State Extension is Cynthia Pollich. She can be reached at cep5@psu.edu. This team works closely with PDA to help highlight the new Agri-Stress Helpline.

PA Department of Agriculture Agri-Stress Helpline has been and continues to be shared broadly with the agricultural community: www.agriculture.pa.gov/Pages/Mental_Wellness.aspx. The helpline is available 24/7 by calling 833-897-2474 (AGRI).

About Penn State Extension:

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