



SEP 10 2015

North Carolina Bulletin: 190-15-02

**Subject: ECS—NRCS role in anticipated North Carolina Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza outbreak response**

**Purpose:** To help NRCS employees to understand the agency's preparation, response and role in a potential outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in North Carolina

**Expiration Date.** September 30, 2015

**Background.** Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is a rapidly spreading, contagious virus that infects birds. It is often fatal to commercial, and 'backyard' chickens and turkeys. Since December 2014, several HPAI incidents have occurred along the Pacific, Central, Mississippi migratory bird flyways, with the most serious concentrated outbreak occurring in Minnesota and Iowa during spring 2015.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (NCDA) are anticipating HPAI to be detected in the state during the fall of 2015 during bird migration on the Eastern flyway. NRCS has joined APHIS, the NCDA State Veterinary Division, the NCDA Emergency Programs Division, and other agencies in preparing a response to minimize damage in the event of an HPAI outbreak in North Carolina.

**Explanation.** If an HPAI outbreak occurs in North Carolina, the response will be coordinated by APHIS and the NCDA State Veterinarian. Their response will focus on virus containment and management through: infected farm isolation, setting up a quarantine and monitoring zone around an infected farm with required procedures for operation and movement of susceptible species; euthanizing the entire bird population of the infected farm, managing and disposal of mortality, disinfecting farm facilities, inspecting the quarantine area, and then farm re-population. In significantly affected states, this process has taken several months to complete.

The NCDA State Veterinarian has determined "in-house composting" is the preferred method for HPAI mortality management and disposal because two complete heating cycles will kill the HPAI virus and because this method can minimize environmental impacts. Burial of HPAI mortality is an option too, but only if a site is pre-approved by the NCDA State Veterinarian after evaluation by a qualified soils expert. NCDA has developed a fact sheet to assist producers in comparing burial and in house composting. The State Veterinarian has indicated that no additional burial sites will be approved after HPAI is detected in NC.

Where HPAI is suspected on a farm, a NCDA emergency team will provide rapid laboratory tests to determine if the virus is present. Where HPAI is confirmed, the NCDA emergency team

will direct euthanizing the farm's flock. A subject matter expert, under contract to APHIS, will provide directions to the farmer for implementation of a mortality management plan provide support for initiating in-house composting, or burial. Where in-house composting is selected, the farmer will monitor compost temperatures to enable the subject matter expert to determine the progress and completion of the compost cycles. A typical effective compost cycle will be around 28 days, divided into two 14-day 'turns'.

**Instructions.** The NRCS role in HPAI response will primarily involve furnishing soil data and nutrient management planning assistance for land application of compost. NRCS employees should be prepared to provide producers printed soil information when they request it for mortality burial site planning and evaluation. Soil interpretations generated from Web Soil Survey such as "Catastrophic Mortality, Large Animal disposal, Pit", "Water Features", "Flooding Frequency Class", and "Drainage Class" could all be helpful to the producer.

NRCS employees will not provide on-site assistance for evaluation of potential HPAI burial sites, nor will NRCS provide on-site monitoring of HPAI-related mortality management or disposal activities.

If an HPAI outbreak occurs, it will be important for NRCS employees to be aware of the location of designated quarantine zones. Coordination is underway to determine how NRCS can make employees informed about the location of quarantine zones. NRCS service to farms inside quarantine zones may be temporarily interrupted. When a service delay occurs, Field Offices should document the situation, inform the customer that: an HPAI-related quarantine zone is a circumstance beyond anyone's control, NRCS will provide the requested service as soon as possible, and that NRCS will exercise good judgement to any contractual issue that arises from HPAI-caused delay.

Once HPAI mortality composting is completed, NRCS may receive requests for assistance on mortality compost storage and land application. NRCS is seeking more information from the State Veterinarian and the NC Division of Water Resources (NC DWR) about the expectations for storage and land application for compost. Use of waste storage facilities with sufficient capacity for storage of HPAI compost is permissible. Through coordination with NCDA and the Interagency Nutrient Management Committee, NRCS expects to be prepared to provide requested nutrient management planning assistance for compost land application. NC DWR has indicated mortality compost will not be subject to the same storage requirements as poultry litter. Further updates will be provided to NRCS employees on a routine basis through email, teleconferences, and bulletins when needed.

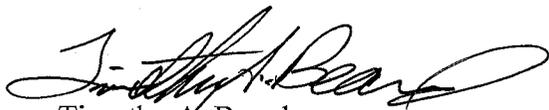
**Biosecurity.** NRCS employees are reminded of the importance of consistently following the NRCS Biosecurity policy at all times. In cases of infectious disease outbreaks, the Biosecurity policy does not allow NRCS employees to visit affected areas, unless requested by APHIS or the NCDA State Veterinarian. The State Office has placed an order for fresh supplies of disposable shoe covers, disinfectant, and sprayers sufficient to place one complete kit in each agency owned/leased vehicle. This equipment will be distributed through Area Offices as soon as it is delivered.

Even with routine updates of relevant information, it is essential for NRCS employees to understand that the NCDA HPAI website is *the* authoritative reference for official information, and about HPAI. NRCS employees are strongly encouraged to become familiar this website, in order to be prepared to respond to customers' needs.

Important websites and links for NRCS employees to utilize if an HPAI outbreak should occur in North Carolina are:

- NCAD Producer HPAI fact sheet
- NRCS Biosecurity policy
- NCDA HPAI website

**Contact.** NRCS-related HPAI questions should be directed to Josh Spencer, Water Quality Specialist, at 919-873-2120 or [josh.spencer@nc.usda.gov](mailto:josh.spencer@nc.usda.gov).



Timothy A. Beard  
State Conservationist