



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

SEP 11 2015

The Honorable Terry Branstad
Governor
State of Iowa
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Dear Governor Branstad:

I am writing to you on a matter of great importance: highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), which has had a devastating effect on the Midwest poultry industry, State economies, individual producers, and local communities. Impacts have been felt from international trade down to consumer egg prices. While no new HPAI cases have been detected since June, we at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are taking an all-hands approach to preparing for a possible resurgence of the disease this fall, when migrating birds could carry the virus and place poultry in all States at risk. I ask that you take this threat seriously and act without delay to review your State's existing biosecurity measures and immediately engage your emergency response teams and animal health agencies to proactively review your State's preparedness plans, if you have not already done so.

Based on our experience with the virus, it is most important that you quickly inventory your local resources—including personnel, equipment, and supplies—and be prepared to deploy these resources. I also urge you to ensure availability of disposal options for depopulated birds and to determine in advance whether you need additional regulatory authorities for such disposal. The following USDA Web site includes information on emergency-response planning:
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/aiupdates>.

Equally important is readying your State's poultry farmers to deal with another HPAI outbreak. Last winter and spring, we saw HPAI gain entry into poultry facilities through multiple possible transmission routes, including farm-to-farm spread. For that reason, I ask that you engage producers in your State to ensure that they are fully aware of not only the need to significantly increase biosecurity, but how to implement additional measures to prevent entry of the virus into their facilities. Producers also need to know the signs of HPAI so they can detect and report the disease. Useful HPAI resources, including epidemiology reports and updated biosecurity information, can be accessed at the Web site listed above. If you or your staff have questions, please feel free to contact Ms. Sarah Scanlon, USDA Acting Director of External and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (202) 720-9962 or via e-mail at Sarah.Scanlon@usda.gov.

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Should your State experience detections of HPAI this fall, we stand ready to assist you with response efforts to eradicate the disease as quickly as possible. I am confident that together we can be prepared to respond quickly and decisively to support our farmers and communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Tom J. Vilsack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" and last name "Vilsack" clearly legible.

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary