



Avrom Farm



# Raising Pastured Poultry During an HPAI Outbreak

# Introductions



**Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT)** is a national nonprofit organization that works to ensure that all food-producing animals are raised in a humane and healthy manner.



## **Larissa McKenna & Samantha Gasson**

FACT's Humane Farming Program Team

**Email Larissa:** [lmckenna@foodanimalconcerns.org](mailto:lmckenna@foodanimalconcerns.org)

**Email Sam:** [sgasson@foodanimalconcerns.org](mailto:sgasson@foodanimalconcerns.org)

**Website:** [foodanimalconcernstrust.org/farmer](http://foodanimalconcernstrust.org/farmer)

## **FACT's services to support livestock and poultry farmers include:**

- **Conference scholarships** (ongoing)
- **Customized handouts** (ongoing)
- **Free webinars** (ongoing)
- **Fund-a-Farmer Grants** (not currently accepting applications)
- **Humane Farming Mentorship Program** (not currently accepting applications)
- **Financial and Business Training** (not currently accepting applications)

# Our Presenter



**Mike Badger**


American Pastured Poultry Producers Association (APPPA); Badger's Millside Farm in Hughesville, PA

# Raising Pastured Poultry During an Avian Influenza Outbreak

Mike Badger



# Let's Cover


- The Problem
  - The Risks
  - The “B” Word
  - A Holistic Approach
- 

# 2022 Outbreak

- Wild Bird Surveillance: Nearly 300 detections
- Poultry detections:
  - Backyard: 6
  - Commercial: 7
- as of Feb 27, 2022
  
- Source: USDA 2022 Detections of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza.  
<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai>



# Is Your Flock At Risk?

- Short answer, yes.
  - “How much?” is the appropriate question.
- 



# What is HPAI?

- Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
  - Carried by wild ducks & other birds
  - Affects domestic poultry
  - Highly contagious
  - Reportable disease
  - Control method: depopulation
- Also a low path
  - Not as deadly
  - Can mutate



# Economic Concerns from 2015

- 12% of U.S. laying hens on 50 farms
- 8% of turkey inventory on 160 farms
- 50 countries blocked imports from U.S.
  - Broiler exports down 26% in 2015
  - Egg exports down 13% in 2015
  - Turkey exports down 23% in 2015
- Price surges

- Source: Impacts of the 2014-2015 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Outbreak on the U.S. Poultry Sector:  
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/outlooks/86282/ldpm-282-02.pdf?v=539>.

# Numbers from 2015

- 211 Commercial farms
  - 50+ million birds
- 21 Backyard flocks
  - 10,000 birds
    - Including 5,000 game birds
- Where's the greatest risk?



# Risk

- A fraction of % total birds are backyard
- Intensely confined birds
- What about organic & pastured flocks?





## USDA's Own Words

- “In addition, the smaller facilities that we are exempting from the requirement are less likely to have HPAI outbreaks than are the non-exempt ones. On smaller facilities, birds density tends to be less which minimizes overall viral load. Additionally, if a smaller facility was identified with HPAI the disease is less likely to spread outward to other premises.”
- Source: [Docket No. APHIS–2015–0061]. Interim Rule - Conditions for Payment of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Indemnity Claims



# Favorable Conditions

- Cool, moist environments
- Intensive confinement
- genetic uniformity?
- Easily destroyed by sunlight

# Signs of HPAI

Sharp reduction in feed and water consumption

The birds become very quiet

Respiratory problems: difficulty breathing, coughing, sneezing, snicking

discharge from eyes and beak

Neurological signs: difficulty walking or twisted neck

Sharp drop in egg production

Swollen combs and wattles; turn bluish/purplish in color from lack of oxygen

Swelling around the eyes

Source: Dr. Chrislyn Wood, USDA APHIS Veterinarian. <https://pasturedpoultrytalk.com/117>

# Confirm Diagnosis

via a lab

Hotline: 866-  
4USDA-WS

Protect the  
Flock

Healthy  
immune  
system

Biosecurity



# What do you do when

- Biosecurity fails?
  - The industry says, you need better and more...
- CRS report



# Congressional Research Service

---

- “Besides wild birds shedding the AI virus, APHIS found that HPAI may have been **spread through lax biosecurity** measures. These include sharing of equipment and employees between infected and non-infected farms, the inadequate cleaning of vehicles moving between farms, and the presence of rodents or small wild birds inside poultry barns. APHIS also found that environmental factors could play a role as **the HPAI virus was found in air samples that could be transmitted by wind** to other farms.
- Source: Update on the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Outbreak of 2014-2015.  
<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44114/4>


# Congressional Research Service

---

- Scrupulous biosecurity practices may not fully protect against AI. The poultry industry increased biosecurity after the 1980s HPAI outbreak. Other regulations, such as the Food and Drug Administration's Egg Safety Rule, 36 require egg producers to implement certain biosecurity measures. But as the UEP witness pointed out in testimony, his farm, **one of the largest egg farms in Iowa, received a perfect score on a USDA biosecurity audit two months before being infected with HPAI."**
- Source: Update on the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Outbreak of 2014-2015. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44114/4>

# Disease Triangle

- Host
    - Immune status, susceptibility, health status, including other diseases, that might affect the ability to fight off the virus
  - Virus
    - Quantity
  - Environment.
    - Ventilation and temperature are important.
    - Like people, they're less likely to get sick if in a well-ventilated environment and if you're spread apart from other people or birds.
  - Combination of all these things makes the birds susceptible.
- Source: Interview with Dr. Chrislyn Wood, USDA APHIS on Pastured Poultry Talk. <https://pasturedpoultrytalk.com/117>.



# Promote Healthy Immune System

- Feed highest quality feed
- Low stocking density on pasture and in winter housing
- Ensure the feed is balanced for the species, class and age of bird.
- Keep brooder and winter bedding dry.
- Move birds often enough to keep the flock on fresh, clean pasture.
- Incorporate natural sunlight into the daily living environment in the brooder, winter housing, and pasture.
- Maintain low-stress stocking densities.

# Biosecurity Ideas for Pastured Flocks

---

- See last slide (healthy immune systems)
- Don't water flock out of ponds
- Don't share equipment
- Use dedicated boots for chores
- Restrict the access of feed trucks, delivery vehicles, processors, and other services to non-production areas of the farm. Source poultry from reliable sources
- Avoid poultry shows, fairs, and backyard flocks
  
- See "Holistic Approach to Pastured Poultry Biosecurity." <https://apppa.org/Avian-Influenza>

# Advantages for Pastured

---

- Low density
- Independent / decentralized farms
  - (contract grower model is a huge risk for biosecurity)
- Flocks often set back off road
  - Epidemiology report from July 15 farms set back off road 100 yards was a advantage
- HPAI is seasonal concern
  - Easily destroyed with sunlight and warm temps

# Resources

- APPPA HPAI Resource Center
  - <https://apppa.org/Avian-Influenza>
- USDA
  - <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza>





# Questions?

Please type into the Q & A tab

# Connect with **FACT**

Food Animal Concerns Trust

## Upcoming webinars

- 🐔 **March 3:** Operating a Meat CSA: The Power of Subscription-Based Sales
- 🐔 **March 7:** Beefing Up Your Farm's Brand & Online Presence
- 🐔 **March 29:** Business Structure Basics for Your Farm

## Grants, Scholarships, Training, Mentorship & More!

- 🐔 **Scholarships** – *ongoing*
- 🐔 **Customized handouts** on the nutritional benefits of food from pastured animals

Sign up for emails @ [foodanimalconcernstrust.org/](http://foodanimalconcernstrust.org/)

Join us on social media

