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Questions and Answers

Avian Influenza and Border Protection

Q. How does USDA work to prevent the introduction of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) from entering the United States?

A. USDA, the Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are part of the global network of surveillance working to keep a potential contagious disease threat from entering the United States and its neighbors.

In order to protect the United States, the USDA maintains trade restrictions on the importation of poultry and poultry products from countries with HPAI-affected domestic poultry. While USDA establishes the regulations for these restrictions, the DHS U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is responsible for enforcing these laws. CBP Agriculture Specialists, following USDA regulations, are not allowing the importation of live poultry, commercial birds, pet birds and/or “hatching eggs” from countries affected by the HPAI virus. USDA continually updates its poultry and livestock import procedures to reflect the most current disease status information that could affect U.S. imports.

Q. Besides trade restrictions, what else does USDA do?

A. In addition to import restrictions, USDA quarantines and tests live birds imported into the United States to ensure they are not carrying any foreign animal diseases. Except for birds from Canada which are not quarantined, all pet birds and live poultry from countries allowed to export them into the United States must be quarantined for at least 30 days at a USDA animal import center.

USDA also prohibits poultry products from any country, including China, whose food safety system has not been determined as equivalent. USDA has Import Surveillance Liaison Officers stationed at major ports and other points of entry to the United States. They verify that poultry products imported from other countries originate from an eligible establishment within an equivalent country and are properly certified and inspected prior to entry.

Avian Influenza and World Trade

Q. Could live poultry, poultry or poultry products come from a country where there is highly pathogenic avian influenza?

A. Poultry products imported into the U.S. must meet all safety standards that are applied to foods produced in the United States. No poultry or poultry products from countries and/or regions with confirmed cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza can be imported into the United States. USDA regulations require that import permits accompany properly sanitized poultry products, such as raw feathers.

Q. Is avian influenza a reportable disease under international trade guidelines?

USDA Questions and Answers: Border Protection and Trade – Avian Influenza

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A. Highly pathogenic avian influenza is considered a reportable disease by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). OIE has developed animal health standards that classify all H5 and H7 viruses as reportable diseases.

Q. Does USDA maintain import restrictions?

A. USDA quarantines and tests live birds imported into the United States to ensure that they do not have any foreign animal diseases such as highly pathogenic avian influenza virus.

All imported live birds (except from Canada) must spend 30 days at a USDA quarantine facility where they are tested for the avian influenza virus before entering the country. Returning U.S.-origin pet birds (except from Canada) also are tested and quarantined at a USDA facility.

USDA maintains trade restrictions on the importation of poultry and poultry products originating from countries and/or regions where the highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza strain has been detected in commercial or traditionally raised poultry (not wild birds). USDA regulations require that import permits accompany properly sanitized poultry products, such as raw feathers.

Additionally, USDA has increased its monitoring for illegally smuggled poultry and poultry products through an anti-smuggling program in coordination with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security - Customs and Border Protection.