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USDA sends team to SE Washington to assist in avian influenza response

OLYMPIA – The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has dispatched an incident management team to Washington in support of [the Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) response efforts to the detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza in Benton County.

In December, avian influenza was detected in wild birds in Whatcom County as a result of heightened surveillance following the Canadian outbreak in British Columbia. Two separate virus strains were identified: H5N2 in a northern pintail duck and H5N8 in a captive gyrfalcon that was fed wild waterfowl.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N2 has since been identified in two flocks in Benton County. Both flocks have been humanely euthanized, with cleaning and disinfection ongoing at the sites. State and federal agencies are conducting outreach in the immediate area aimed at backyard bird owners encouraging them to practice good biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of spreading the disease by preventing contact between their birds and wild waterfowl.

Backyard bird owners are also urged to monitor their flock closely and report sick or dead birds to the [WSDA Avian Health Program](#) at 1-800-606-3056 or USDA at 1-866-536-7593.

A [quarantine](#) is currently in place in parts of Benton and Franklin counties to restrict the movement of poultry and poultry products by order of WSDA. Visit www.agr.wa.gov/lawsrules/rulemaking for the complete quarantine rule and a detailed map. Birds affected by this quarantine include domestic fowl and game birds that are raised in confinement such as chickens, turkeys, ratites, waterfowl, pigeons, doves, guineafowl, peafowl, pheasants, partridge, chukars, quail, and grouse of all ages and their hatching eggs. Poultry products include any poultry commodity or material that can spread HPAI including meat (fresh or frozen), blood or meal, feathers, litter/manure and eggs.

This USDA team will conduct surveillance and voluntary testing of birds in backyard flocks focusing on a 3 kilometer area around each infected premises, starting as early as Saturday, Jan. 10. Surveillance within the remainder of the quarantined area will be based much more on reports of sick or dead birds. The purpose of testing is to confirm that this finding is an isolated event and to assure U.S. trade partners the disease is not a threat to commercial poultry exports.

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Movement of poultry and poultry products within and out of any area under quarantine may be allowed under permit when extraordinary circumstances exist. For information on that process, contact WSDA at 1-800-606-3056 or by email at ahealth@agr.wa.gov.

It is important to note that there is no immediate public health concern with either the H5N2 virus nor the H5N8 virus detected in Washington; however, public health officials are contacting people who may have been exposed to infected birds. The virus has not been detected in commercial poultry operations in Washington nor anywhere else in the U.S.

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