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# STATE OF MONTANA

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## MEMORANDUM

FROM: Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, Administrator and State Veterinarian

SUBJECT: Avian Influenza Update and Biosecurity Advisory Update

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 20, 2023

Despite enjoying several months free from Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza here in Montana, there have been continued detections in areas of our shared flyways. Two recent detections of concern include a detection in commercial flock in Alberta, Canada with proximity to the Montana border and a detection in New Jersey just last week.

Animal health and wildlife officials anticipate that the upcoming fall migration will again bring increased risk for HPAI exposure in Montana and throughout the U.S.

This memo serves as direction from the state veterinarians' office that our recommendation that birds be housed indoors to the extent possible to reduce the risk of introduction of highly pathogenic avian influenza continues from now until the end of spring migration in 2024.

HPAI is concerning for several reasons:

- Outbreaks are often associated with mortality rates that approach 100% in domestic poultry.
- The potential for human and domestic animal infection remains a concern although the risk appears to be low.
- Significant economic and trade impacts, including import restrictions, result when HPAI is present in an area.

To protect flocks, MDOL requests that producers separate domestic poultry from wild birds. As much as possible, house poultry inside and discourage any interaction with wild birds, particularly migrating waterfowl.

Direct contact with infected birds, contaminated objects/equipment, and aerosol (short distances) can spread the virus which is found in feces, saliva, and respiratory secretions. Therefore, an essential element of any biosecurity program is avoiding contact between domestic poultry and other birds. The risk to each farm may be different, so it is important to consider your situation when complying with this request. If you are certified organic and want to make changes to housing, you must contact your certifier before altering confinement and meet their requirements to remain certified.

This heightened biosecurity effort will be important through the end of May 2024 when migration typically ends, and warmer weather begins. Thank you for your cooperation. For additional information please visit the MDOL website here: <https://liv.mt.gov/Animal-Health/Avian-Influenza-2022>.