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State Agriculture Department Prohibits Poultry Exhibits at Fairs & Shows;
Poultry Entering State Must be Tested or Certified Healthy

ANAPOLIS, MD (July 23, 2015) – To do everything possible to mitigate the risk of High Path Avian Influenza (HPAI) from infecting Maryland poultry flocks, the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) will prohibit poultry exhibitions at all fairs and show after Aug. 25. MDA has also issued a quarantine order requiring all hatching eggs and poultry entering from out of state to be tested within 10 days or come from certified clean sources. This quarantine order will remain in effect until at least June 30, 2016.

“This strain of avian influenza could very well bring economic disaster to our largest agricultural sector if we don’t take steps to protect the birds now,” said Agriculture Secretary Joe Bartenfelder. “We have every reason to believe that HPAI will enter Maryland this fall, and we are making every effort to keep it out of our commercial chicken houses and backyard flocks. I strongly encourage all flock owners and managers to take this disease as seriously as they have ever taken anything and to practice enhanced biosecurity at all times.”

HPAI entered the Pacific Northwest of the United States in December 2014 and has been marching east ever since. It is carried by migratory waterfowl, such as ducks and geese, among others. To date, HPAI has been confirmed at 223 locations in 15 states and has impacted 48 million birds. The virus does not live in hot temperatures so incidents of HPAI have declined over the summer, but animal health experts expect cases to appear again during the fall migratory season, which starts in Maryland in early September.
HPAI is not known to threaten human health. It can, however, wipe out flocks of chickens in days. MDA encourages all flock owners of all sizes to exercise enhanced biosecurity measures and to be vigilant in ensuring others on their farms do so as well.

The prohibition on poultry exhibits will impact the Maryland State Fair as well as at least seven other major fairs scheduled after August 25. Many poultry exhibits will be replaced with poultry displays. MDA’s requirements for shows and fairs were revised in May. Those guidelines prohibited all waterfowl from being shown at fairs and shows, and required all poultry to be tested within ten days if they did not come from a clean or monitored flock.

Poultry auctions are not currently impacted by the order because MDA Animal Health officials are onsite at auctions, examining and testing birds. However, if HPAI is suspected in the region, poultry auctions will be closed down as well.

MDA has created a page on its website dedicated solely to HPAI information and news. It also contains information on biosecurity measures flock owners should take to protect their birds. See: www.mda.maryland.gov/AvianFlu

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