UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION

Commercial Poultry News

In This Issue:

Please note the phone number for LESREC has changed:

Main # 301-226-8000

Jon Moyle #301-226-7923

The 2025 Poultry Grower Expo! Was a September Success

We would like to give a HUGE Thank You to our Expo Sponsors this year!

We had over 190 people pre-register, with 140 sign-ins, knowing we didn't catch everyone to sign in, many came and went through side doors, but over 200 meals were handed out. (We have a plan to solve this problem for next year's Expo.) Networking was great, the food was delish, and the educational programs were definitely a hit with our growers!

The 2026 Poultry Grower Expo will be on Wednesday, September 2 at the same place - look for more info during the summer of 2026!

Again, THANK YOU SPONSORS! CHECK THEM OUT:

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Protect Your Flock from HPAI: A Guide to the USDA's Free Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment

By Mostafa Ghanem, DVM, MS, Ph.D. and Madhusudan Timilsina, DVM, MS
Department of Veterinary Medicine, University of Maryland

With the evolving risk of HPAI, discover how USDA's on-farm program identifies wildlife-related vulnerabilities and provides financial support to strengthen your defenses.

The role of wildlife in spreading Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is more significant than ever. While migratory waterfowl are the primary reservoir, the virus has now been detected in over 200 species of birds and 49 mammalian species across the U.S. This means risks are no longer limited to migration seasons; common peridomestic birds like house sparrows, starlings, pigeons, and robins, as well as cattle and other mammals, can introduce the virus directly or indirectly by contaminating feed, water, or equipment.

To help producers address these complex threats, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services now offers a **free Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment (WBA),** a proactive, on-farm evaluation designed to pinpoint and mitigate wildlife-specific risks.

How is the Assessment Done? What Do They Look For?

The assessment is a voluntary, confidential, and collaborative process. The USDA's wildlife biologist will conduct a thorough survey of your farm's exterior, focusing on two main areas of risk:

1. **Direct Contact Risks:** Points where wild birds or mammals could physically enter barns or directly interact with your poultry.
2. **Indirect Contact Risks:** Conditions on your farm that attract wildlife, increasing the chance of disease transmission.

Based on past assessments, some of the **most common hazards** identified include:

- **Compromised Building Exclusion:** Holes or gaps from damage, poor maintenance, or improper installation.
- **Structural Breaches:** Cracks or openings in foundations, walls, and roofs.
- **Wildlife Attractants:** Spilled feed, standing water, clutter that provides shelter, and improperly managed carcasses.

You will receive practical, actionable feedback on how to remediate these specific issues.

Protect Your Flock from HPAI: A Guide ...continued

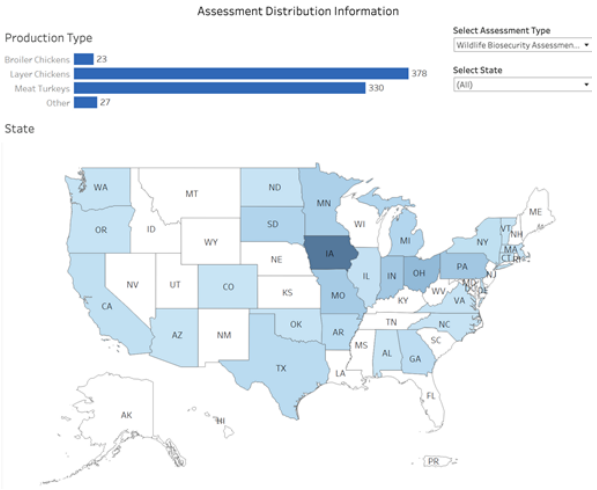
What Are the Benefits for Your Operation?

The expanding host range for HPAI creates new and persistent pathways for the virus to reach poultry. Previous wildlife assessments have shown that even small breaches can significantly increase flock vulnerability.

The benefits of participating are substantial:

- **Expert, Tailored Advice:** Get specific recommendations from a biologist who understands local wildlife behavior and farm operations.
- **Financial Support:** For eligible operations, the USDA may share up to **75% of the cost** for implementing high-risk mitigation measures identified during the assessment.
- **Proactive Protection:** Move from reaction to prevention by addressing vulnerabilities before a breach occurs.
- **Peace of Mind:** Strengthen your overall biosecurity plan and protect your livelihood.

Who is Eligible, and How Can You Request One?



Any commercial poultry producer **not currently affected by an HPAI outbreak** is eligible to request an assessment. The USDA is currently prioritizing egg-producing facilities in major states to help stabilize the market, but all eligible commercial producers are encouraged to apply. According to the USDA dashboard in September 2025, 36 broiler chicken farms in Maryland have received domestic biosecurity assessments, yet **none have** undergone a Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment (WBA). In Delaware, 9 farms received domestic assessments, with only 2 also completing a WBA.

You can request the Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment, a separate Domestic Biosecurity Assessment, or both - **free of charge.**

To request your free assessment, contact the USDA:

- **Phone**: 844-820-2234
- Email: poultry.biosecurity@usda.gov

To speed up the process, include this information in your email: Premises name/ID, full street address (or coordinates), city, state, ZIP code, production type, and your contact information.

More Resources:

Biosecurity Assessment Dashboard: Track program progress at https://bit.ly/4gB9rBQ
Defend the Flock Program: Find more resources at https://bit.ly/4nQhgpY
National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP): www.poultryimprovement.org

References:

1. Presentation: "Wildlife-Focused Biosecurity Improvements to Support HPAI Prevention" by David Marks, USDA Wildlife Services. Presented at the American Association of Avian Pathologists Annual Meeting, July 2025. USDA APHIS Program Data, September 2025.

*Thao-Quyen Nguyen et al.,*Emergence and interstate spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza A (H5N1) in dairy cattle in the United States.Science**388**,eadq0900(2025).DOI:10.1126/science.adq0900

Early Age Cold Conditioning in Broiler Chicks

By Jennifer Timmons, Associate Professor
University of Maryland Eastern Shore

In the last newsletter, strategies to "condition" broiler chickens for high environmental temperatures were discussed. Now that we are moving into the fall and winter months, growers are shifting gears and focusing on things such as heater maintenance and tightening up the house to prevent air leaks around the foundation, end doors and sidewall doors. Early age cold conditioning of broiler chicks is also being studied by researchers to better understand its effects on the physiological and productive responses of broiler chickens.

Prolonged exposure to cold stress can have harmful consequences for bird health and welfare. Newly hatched chicks are susceptible to low temperatures due to their inability to regulate their own body temperature. Therefore, chicks require external heat to maintain their body temperature. The development of a chick's body temperature regulation system is complete by 10 days of age. Similar to the heat conditioning studies, using early cold conditioning techniques takes advantage of the chicks' immature thermoregulation system. These cold conditioning methods use a very short duration of exposure which does not seem to harm the welfare of the chicks.

One study exposed broiler chicks to cold conditioned temperature (59°F) for 3 hours at 3 and 4 days of age. From 21-49 days of age, birds were either exposed to non-cold stress temperature regime (71.5°F) or to cold stress temperature regime (59°F). No differences in day 49 body weight of the cold conditioned and non-cold conditioned birds reared in the 59°F environment. However, the final body weight of the birds that were cold conditioned and raised in the non-cold stress temperatures was higher compared to the final body weight of the non-cold conditioned birds raised in the non-cold stress environment. The mortality of the cold conditioned birds raised under cold stress temperature regime (59°F) was 13%, which was lower compared to the mortality (23%) of the non-cold conditioned birds raised under the cold stress temperature regime. Another study reported similar results with the mortality of non-cold conditioned chicks raised in cold stress conditions (59°F) being higher (11%) compared to the mortality (5%) of cold conditioned chicks raised in cold stress conditions.

Another study evaluated the effect of cold conditioning chicks at 5 days of age and supplemental glutamine to mitigate the effects of cold stress at 35 days of age. Glutamine is an amino acid that plays a role in the immune system and gut health. The authors reported that feeding the cold conditioned chicks a diet with 0.5% glutamine had a positive final body weight response compared to the body weight of the non-cold stressed chicks fed 0% glutamine supplemented diet.

Similar to thermal conditioning methods used on chicks, there are multiple studies reporting the benefits of cold conditioning chicks. The most consistence response to cold conditioned chicks that are cold stressed later in life is improved mortality. Cold conditioning reduces mortality related to ascites in the cold stressed broilers. The cold conditioning methods exposing chicks to colder temperatures for a short duration have demonstrated beneficial results from reducing the effects of cold stress later in life. The widespread application of this method in the broiler industry is not practical. Although these studies do provide us with the knowledge that birds can be "conditioned" to tolerate cold and heat stress conditions later in life which may be beneficial for producers that use non-traditional management techniques for raising their birds such as pasture raised or free-range birds.

Maryland CAFO Permit Moves Forward

The Delmarva Farmer - Jonathan Cribbs

September 19, 2025

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — With federal approval secured, Maryland's new CAFO permit is headed to public comment after the July 7 expiration of the previous permit stalled new poultry house construction.

The Maryland Department of the Environment confirmed on Sept. 18 that EPA has approved the state's draft (CAFO) Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation permit to move forward. That clears the way for Maryland to begin its statutory public participation process, which will include public meetings and responses to comments before a final version is issued, said Jay Apperson, department spokesperson.

"We encourage all stakeholders to reach out with questions and to take part in the public engagement process, as we remain committed to supporting agriculture while protecting public health and the environment," he said.

The announcement was "great news" for the poultry industry, said Holly Porter, executive director of the Delmarva Chicken Association, which expected a longer wait for federal approval.

"It's better news than what we were anticipating," she said. "Hopefully we can be back to normal by some point early next year."

The department of the environment did not show the association the proposed permit before it was sent to EPA, she said, and the poultry industry expects to review it soon.

"The association is going to read through it thoroughly," she said. "We will definitely be making comments of some sort, for good or bad."

For growers, the lapse before the EPA's approval created weeks of uncertainty. Porter said her group has identified about 50 poultry houses statewide in various states of pre-construction or modification, representing roughly $30 million in economic activity. Some projects may be covered under the previous permit, but houses for new farms are not.

In June and July, even projects ostensibly covered under the previous permit were struggling to move through the environment department — a bottleneck that's since eased, Porter said. She expressed hope that houses and modifications covered under the expired permit could move forward before winter weather sets in.

Maryland CAFO Permit Moves Forward...continued

But the department of the environment has been assisting farmers throughout the summer, Apperson said.

“We’ve been working closely with the Department of Agriculture, the poultry industry, and farmers themselves — even going door to door — to make sure everyone covered under the previous permit stayed protected after it expired,” he said.

For poultry grower Far Nasir of Pocomoke City, the delay has already meant financial strain. Nasir, who operates six houses under contract with Perdue Farms, has been working for more than a year to add six more on a separate property.

“The process takes way too long,” he said. “They had five years to (get a new permit approved), but they’re not ready. That’s just mind-boggling.”

With the permit expired, his project sat idle. Nasir estimates the delay represents nearly $4 million in economic activity, affecting contractors, lenders, real estate transactions and local government revenue.

“It just creates this whole backlog,” he said. “The real estate agent is not getting paid. The construction company is not getting paid. The seller is not getting paid. The state is not getting paid.”

Nasir said he believes the state is deliberately dragging its feet to stymie the poultry industry.

“If you make something hard enough, people get discouraged and just don’t do it, and I think that’s what the state is trying to do, in my opinion,” he said.

The association was never given a clear sense of why the lapse occurred, Porter said.

The new permit could face obstacles, however, as environmental groups press for changes. Food & Water Watch and allied organizations wrote Gov. Wes Moore in July, urging tighter restrictions on waste management and monitoring. The group says it has not seen the draft now approved for review and expects to examine it once it becomes public. While it has not filed litigation against the Moore administration, Food & Water Watch sued the state over a previous permit in 2015.

Porter said growers have come to expect it. “I don’t think anyone would be surprised if a new permit was challenged again,” she said.

The permit now moves into Maryland’s public comment period, where MDE will hold meetings and respond to feedback before issuing a final version.

Register Today for the 2025 Agricultural and Environmental Law Conference

Registration is open for the Agricultural and Environmental Law Conference.

The Agriculture Law Education Initiative (ALEI) will hold the 2025 Agricultural and Environmental Law Conference (AELC) on Monday, Nov. 10, 7:30 a.m. – 3:20 p.m. at the Graduate Hotel in Annapolis, Maryland.

This unique annual event brings together stakeholders from Maryland's agriculture, conservation, and legal fields to focus on the network of environmental laws affecting the state's agricultural businesses. On or before Oct. 13, registration for the event is $75. After Oct. 13, registration is $150. Registration for students is $25. This year's conference will feature six panels with experts discussing state and federal agricultural and environmental issues. Two continuing nutrient management education credits will be available to attendees in Maryland. For a detailed schedule and to register, visit https://umaglaw.org/alei-ag-and-environmental-law-conference/2025-agricultural-and-environmental-law-conference/. Those with questions about the AELC may contact ALEI at 301-405-1271 or umaglaw@umd.edu.

A few of the topics featured this year include:

- **From Crops to Kilowatts: Growing with Maryland's Energy Demands:** Maryland's expanding energy needs are reshaping rural communities. This session will cover legal issues tied to new transmission lines, eminent domain, and opportunities for agrivoltaics that combine farming with solar power.
- **Maryland's New Heat Illness Prevention Standard:** Last fall, Maryland introduced a new Heat Illness Prevention Standard that applies to any workplace—indoors or outdoors—where the heat index reaches 80°F or more. This includes farms. Learn what the rule requires and how agricultural employers can stay compliant while protecting their workforce.
- **Addressing Local Food Security through Farmer-Centered Community Partnership Networks:** This panel will feature a discussion on the impacts of federal policy changes for health and nutrition benefits programs, as well as state and local policy and partnership solutions that can help sustain food access programs. It will also highlight lessons learned from ALEI's Maryland-based SARE outreach project, showing how farmers can become vital access points for fresh local foods while strengthening communities and the local economy.
- **From Fields to Courtrooms:** Ag Law Shifts in 2025 and Beyond: A 2025 agricultural and environmental law update with a 2026 outlook, covering recent state right-to-farm rulings, evolving PFAS litigation and regulation, and key legislative changes impacting

Poultry Farmers Urged to Practice Enhanced Biosecurity

The Maryland Department of Agriculture

Fall Migration Brings Increased Risk of HPAI

ANNAPOLIS, MD (September 15, 2025) – With the fall migration underway, the **Maryland Department of Agriculture** is urging all poultry farmers to review and implement enhanced biosecurity plans. This comes after the confirmation of HPAI in a backyard flock in Anne Arundel County, marking the first such case since spring of 2025.

"As we transition into the fall season, Maryland faces a heightened risk of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). Our state experienced an unprecedented surge in detections earlier this year, underscoring the urgent need for enhanced vigilance," said **Secretary Kevin Atticks**. "For our dedicated poultry farmers, biosecurity isn't just a recommendation; it is, unequivocally, the most effective defense against HPAI. Proactive measures, stringent protocols, and unwavering adherence to best practices are essential to safeguard our flocks, protect our agricultural economy, and ensure the continued health of Maryland's poultry industry."

Migratory waterfowl moving through Maryland presents a heightened risk for HPAI, a devastating disease for poultry operations. HPAI is caused by an influenza type A virus, which can infect poultry (chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quails, domestic ducks, geese, and guinea fowl) and is carried by free flying waterfowl such as ducks, geese and shorebirds.

Commercial and backyard flock owners are urged to follow these guidelines to maintain a sanitary, bio secure premise:

- Restrict access to poultry by posting "Restricted Access" signage, securing the area with a gate, or both.
- Take steps to ensure that contaminated materials on the ground are not transported into the poultry growing house or area.
- Provide the following items to anyone entering or leaving any area where poultry are kept:
    - ◊ Footbaths and foot mats with disinfectant;
    - ◊ Boot washing and disinfectant station;
    - ◊ Footwear change or foot covers.
- Cover and secure feed to prevent wild birds, rodents or other animals from accessing it.
- Cover and properly contain carcasses, used litter, or other disease-containing organic materials to prevent wild birds, rodents or other animals from accessing them and to keep them from being blown around by wind.
- Allow MDA to enter the premises during normal working hours to inspect your biosecurity and sanitation practices.
- Report any unusual bird deaths or sudden increases in very sick birds to the MDA Animal Health Program at 410-841-5810 or after-hours to 410-841-5971. Also contact the USDA at 866-536-7593.
- For more information on avian influenza, please visit the department's website.

Yes, this is a good reminder for EVERY Poultry Grower

Protecting Your Flock
From Avian Influenza

What is Avian Influenza (AI)?

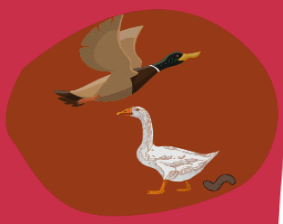
- AI is a virus carried by migratory waterfowl (ducks and geese).
- Domestic poultry (chickens, turkeys, fowl) are susceptible and will become very sick.
- Migratory bird flyways cross the United States. Maryland is in the Atlantic Flyway.

Cover chicken coops and runs to prevent comingling with waterfowl.

Wear dedicated clothing and shoes that should never leave your farm

Wash hands before and after working with birds.

Keep all birds in coop to prevent contamination with waterfowl droppings.



Change food and water daily.

Remove birdhouses, feeders, and baths used by wild birds.

Clean and disinfect equipment in contact with birds or droppings, including cellphones.

After visiting places where poultry owners congregate, clean your boots before caring for your own birds.

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS!

- ✓ Lack of energy and appetite
- ✓ Decreased egg production or softened/misshapen eggs
- ✓ Swelling of the head, eyelids, and comb
- ✓ Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs
- ✓ Stumbling, falling down, diarrhea
- ✓ Sudden death

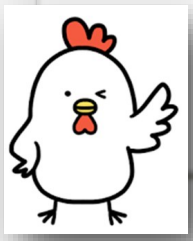
HOW IS THE DISEASE TRANSMITTED IN BIRDS?

- Foot traffic
- Secretions from birds' mouths, nostrils, eyes, excrement
- Contact with infected droppings
- Movement of infected birds
- Contaminated clothing and equipment

Report unusual illnesses, deaths and high mortalities to 410-841-5810

REGISTER YOUR FLOCK!

Backyard poultry in Maryland MUST be registers with MDA!



Coming Commercial Poultry Events

October 1 - Poultry Grower Evening Meeting

Wor-Wic Community College, 3200 Campus Dr., Hazel Center, 302, Salisbury

Dr. Brian Fairchild, Professor, Extension Poultry Specialist, UGA

"Flock Success = First Two Weeks"

Sponsors: Clear View Enterprises, The Land Group, and Harvest Pro Mfg.

November 12, 2025 (Salisbury) *November 13, 2025 (Denton)*

Two Locations to Reach Our Growers

Grower Lunch Break

Dr. Dan Bautista - 'Bird Health'

MDA's Salisbury Animal Health Lab

*Register for **Salisbury's Nov. 12 Meeting** click on blue date above or go to:* **https://forms.gle/uJosTr24UY6pQm6p7**

*Register for **Denton's Nov. 13 Meeting** click on blue date above or go to:* **https://forms.gle/8JXk4pLJL2jggXqJ8**

December 10, 2025 - Rotem Controller Training

Training will cover precision mode and attendees are encouraged to join the Munters Academy and look over controller operation prior to the training:

https://signup.foodtechacademy.mymunters.com

Registration is limited to 30: https://forms.gle/dtoDe4dfJr9UKHpf6

Thank you….and Goodbye!

In the last 12.5 years I have had the *wonderful* opportunity to meet & email with this Delmarva Poultry Family, who have been *so* kind to me, including those I work with, but now it is my turn to retire and enjoy time with my husband of 42 years, our family, grandkids and life outside of the University. What does this mean to you? No more nagging emails from me, lol, now they will come from Jon or Jenny!

Thank you for everything! ~ Sheila Oscar