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## **Defending the Flock & Farm**

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was the topic of an informational zoom hosted by USDA - APHIS this week. Given my role in Extension and backyard poultry interest, I sat in on this informative meeting. Not surprisingly so, biosecurity was the focus in “Defending the Flock” to protect animals and prevent the spread of disease. While the focus today is on poultry, good biosecurity protocols are never a bad thing to implement on ANY animal operation.

Biosecurity operating practices to block diseases and the pathogens that carry them have proven to be the most effective way to protect the nation’s poultry, property, and people. Good biosecurity practices involve a multi-pronged approach to providing defense. Following are a few biosecurity highlights from the updated APHIS materials that should be considered for implementation.

- Keeping barns, coops, and other enclosures clean is one of the best ways to prevent germs from spreading. A thorough cleaning, and then applying disinfectants, is vital to stop disease spreading.
- Keep equipment and vehicles clean and germ-free. Make sure everyone who comes in contact with the flock knows and follows biosecurity procedures to avoid spreading germs and diseases.
- Limit access to your birds and property. Everyone who comes into contact with your flock should use personal protective equipment to maintain biosecurity.
- Food, water, and shelter in areas are a magnet for wild birds, rodents, and insects. These uninvited visitors carry germs and diseases, mites and other parasites, viruses like avian influenza, bacteria such as Salmonella and Campylobacter, or other disease agents.
- Start out with healthy poultry by buying from sources that participate in the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP, [www.poultryimprovement.org](http://www.poultryimprovement.org)). Do not add or mix birds from multiple sources and quarantine new birds separately from the current flock. Additionally, do not mix different types of poultry in the same areas IE: separate waterfowl from chickens.
- Diseases are caused by tiny viruses, bacteria, and other microscopic particles found everywhere and that can be moved or spread on clothes, shoes, or equipment. Have clear separation between where your birds are kept and the rest of the world.
- Establish a perimeter buffer area: a zone outside of bird enclosures that gives you space to work in while caring for birds but is separate from the rest of the property. This is especially true if multiple species of livestock are raised on the same operation.
- Poultry needs clean, safe water to drink, and it is needed to cool birds and clean facilities and equipment. Water can carry disease agents, so they have a clean source or treat water. Water from ponds that migratory waterfowl can access should NEVER be used for domesticated birds.
- Food and clean litter are two items needed in ample supply. However, they can attract unwanted wildlife, rodents, and insects. It is important to receive, store, and handle these items carefully to minimize the chance of contamination. Manure management is important too.

The Defend the Flock program includes checklists, videos, and other resources that reflect the knowledge, insights, and experience of USDA, veterinarians, poultry owners, growers, scientists, and other experts. All Defend the Flock materials are available at no charge 24/7 at the Defend the Flock Resource Center [www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock)