Protecting Ohio’s valuable poultry industry from deadly avian flu

Since November 2014, an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5 spread by wild waterfowl has gripped the U.S. poultry industry, killing close to 50 million birds in at least 19 states.

While the virus has not yet reached Ohio, Ohio State University Extension experts have been helping poultry producers learn about the disease, boost biosecurity measures on the farm and prepare to minimize the flu’s impact if it were to reach the state.

“Our industry needs to adopt tighter biosecurity, as this virus can spread wide and fast, and outbreaks could reoccur in spring and fall,” said Mohamed El-Gazzar, OSU Extension poultry veterinarian. “We are also helping with logistical challenges such as identifying the best way to dispose of infected birds in case of an outbreak.”

To address this challenge, biosystems engineer Fred Michel developed a plan for Ohio egg farms to compost up to hundreds of thousands of dead chickens on-site, reducing the risk of contamination to other layer houses or nearby farms.

More: go.osu.edu/birdflu

Ohio State veterinary students visit a turkey farm to learn about avian flu biosecurity. Outreach and education are key to protecting the poultry industry from infectious diseases.

ESSENTIALS

• The current avian flu outbreak is a serious threat to Ohio’s $2.3 billion poultry industry, which directly supports more than 14,600 jobs. Nationally, Ohio ranks second in egg production and ninth in turkey production.
• If Ohio were to experience a poultry production loss of 50 percent, OSU Extension estimates the ripple effect would reach $1 billion in overall economic losses, including $815,000 in annual wages.
• Heavy losses to Iowa’s egg farms from this virus have sent egg prices soaring across the United States. If the virus reaches Ohio, prices will increase even more dramatically, affecting both consumers and food manufacturers.

“We keep a very good working relationship with Ohio State. We call upon researchers and veterinarians with questions on various fronts related to poultry diseases and food safety. They have many resources and expertise that we rely on all the time. They truly care about our industry.”

— Tim Barman, veterinarian, Cooper Farms

Mohamed El-Gazzar, middle, with Tim Barman, right
WE CONNECT WITH PEOPLE IN ALL STAGES OF LIFE.
We work with families and children, farmers and business owners, and community leaders and elected officials to build better lives, better businesses and better communities that make Ohio great. We do this through a focus on the following impact areas.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES
We teach people how to apply research in their daily lives in order for them to make informed choices about everything from finances to healthy living to food safety.

PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS
Our 4-H youth development program delivers skills in leadership, communications, math, science and research to 216,000 young Ohioans. Ohio 4-H extends its reach through special in-school, after-school and summer programs.

ENHANCING AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT
Ohio’s diverse agricultural, horticultural and forestry industries contribute $105 billion to the state’s economy every year. We assist with technology, marketing and educational support, protecting Ohio’s position in the global marketplace. We also work to enhance the environment, water quality and natural resources in the state — balancing economic progress with environmental sustainability.

ADVANCING EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME OPPORTUNITIES
Our economic, small business and job development programs are tailored to local community needs in every county, whether metropolitan, rural or a combination of both.

OSU Extension’s mission
Engaging people to strengthen their lives and communities through research-based educational programming

Locally based, jointly funded
We are the university’s community-based research and outreach arm, delivering knowledge from The Ohio State University to every county in Ohio.
We are jointly funded through a line item in the State of Ohio’s budget, through county funds and through the federal government. We do not receive funding from student tuition.

youtube.com/user/osuextension
facebook.com/OSUExtension
twitter.com/foodagenvnews

u.osu.edu/cfaesimpact
extension.osu.edu

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES