

# Waterfowl prohibited from Delaware State Fair in avian influenza precaution

DOVER – To protect against the spread of avian influenza, the Delaware Department of Agriculture is prohibiting waterfowl entries in the poultry competitions at the Delaware State Fair next month.

Exhibitors of ducks and geese are being notified of the restrictions. Exhibitions of chickens, quail, pheasants, turkeys and other birds will still take place, with all birds tested for avian influenza by Department of Agriculture personnel before the Fair begins.

“This action is being taken out of an abundance of caution to guard against the spread of avian influenza,” said Delaware State Veterinarian Dr. Heather Hirst. “We know that some entrants will be disappointed, and regret any inconvenience, but these precautions are necessary to help prevent the accidental spread of avian influenza within Delaware.”

While highly pathogenic avian influenza has been detected in many states, primarily in the Midwest, there have been no East Coast cases. There are no immediate public health concerns, and poultry and eggs which are properly prepared and cooked are still safe to eat.

Since many species of wild waterfowl can carry and shed influenza virus in feces without showing any signs of illness, Hirst said it is extremely important to make a strong effort to keep domestic birds separated from wild waterfowl and to keep domestic birds off waterways where wild waterbirds live. Avian influenza spreads bird-to-bird through saliva, feces, and other bodily fluids.

Delaware's commercial poultry industry has a strong and active avian influenza surveillance program, and works in close contact with DDA, the University of Delaware, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other partners.

Biosecurity measures recommended by DDA include isolating birds from visitors and other birds; keeping shoes, tools, equipment, vehicles and cages clean when entering areas where birds live; avoiding tracking wild waterfowl feces into domestic bird living areas; avoiding sharing equipment and tools with neighbors; watching for warning signs of disease; and reporting sick or dead birds.

Sick or dead domestic birds, including backyard flocks and commercial poultry, should be reported to the Delaware Department of Agriculture's Poultry and Animal Health Section, (302) 698-4500 or (800) 282-8685 (Delaware only). To report groups of dead or sick waterfowl, shorebirds or gulls, contact DNREC's Wildlife Section – Wildlife Disease Program, 302-735-3600.

For more information on avian influenza, visit [de.gov/birdflu](http://de.gov/birdflu).

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