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N.C. continues to prepare for possible avian influenza outbreak

RALEIGH – State Veterinarian Doug Meckes announced additional precautions that are being put in place to help North Carolina prepare for a possible introduction of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

The N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is requiring all poultry owners, regardless of the number of birds, to register for an [NCFarmID number](#), Meckes said. This will facilitate the department in alerting poultry owners about an outbreak, especially owners in close proximity to a positive farm. Poultry owners can also sign up for a national premises ID number, but it is not required. Anyone already part of the National Poultry Improvement Plan is exempt from this requirement. An online sign-up form will be available after Aug. 1.

“In planning our response for highly pathogenic avian influenza, one problem we’ve come across is that we can’t protect birds that we don’t know exist,” Meckes said. “We need to know where poultry are located so we can properly protect commercial and backyard flocks.”

Information gathered through NCFarmID registration is used solely for animal health purposes. This critical data will provide animal health officials with necessary contact information in case of an animal health concern, and help identify animals and premises that may have been affected.

The N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is also requiring any commercial poultry grower with 200 or more birds to submit a HPAI outbreak plan. A commercial grower would be any grower under contract with an integrated company.

“It’s very important that growers think through the worst-case scenario, because a confirmation of high-path avian flu would certainly be a worst-case scenario,” Meckes said. “We want each grower to consider their resources and location to determine how they can best handle an outbreak in a way that is environmentally sensitive and gets them back online as soon as is feasible.”

An HPAI Outbreak Plan template will be available on the department's website after Aug. 1. Growers will need to submit the plan to the Veterinary Division no later than Sept. 15. While only commercial growers will be required to submit the plan, all flock owners are encouraged to plan ahead and consider how they would respond to a confirmed positive.

Last month, Meckes and Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler announced that [bird shows and sales would be halted](#) from Aug. 15 to January 15, 2016. The intent is to prevent birds from commingling and spreading the HPAI virus. Individual sales are still allowed to take place.

For more information about avian influenza and the department's response plans, go to www.ncagr.gov/avianflu.

**Website for registration form: <http://www.ncagr.gov/ncfarmid/index.htm>