



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH
INSPECTION SERVICE

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THROUGH: Ruth Brown
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FROM: Edward Avalos
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SUBJECT: Request for Emergency Approval of a New Information Collection for Monitoring and Managing Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza; Capacity for Depopulation, Disposal, and Cleaning and Disinfecting

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is submitting to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) an information collection request for an emergency 3-year approval for data gathering regarding preparing for, monitoring, and managing highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). APHIS will assess State and industry planning and preparedness activities, including the capacity for depopulation, disposal, and cleaning and disinfecting.

APHIS' main mission is the prevention, control, and eradication of animal diseases to safeguard animal health. Disease prevention is the most effective method for maintaining a healthy animal population and for enhancing the United States' ability to compete globally in animal and animal product trade.

HPAI is an extremely infectious and often fatal viral disease affecting all types of birds and poultry. HPAI can strike poultry quickly, without infection warning signs. Once established, the disease can spread rapidly from flock to flock. HPAI caused by any subtype had not been found in birds or poultry in the United States until mid-December 2014, when ongoing HPAI H5 detections began occurring along the Pacific, Central, and Mississippi Flyways. Cases in wild birds, captive wild birds, backyard poultry, and/or commercial poultry have been reported in 21 States. Three of these States – Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin – have declared states of emergency. To date, nearly 50 million birds have been culled as a result of the confirmed presence of HPAI strains. These depopulation losses represent about 10 percent of the U.S. average layer inventory, over 7 percent of the average U.S. turkey inventory, and about 6 percent of the average pullet inventory.

APHIS anticipates HPAI detections will start again when migratory waterfowl begin flying south from Canada. This could be as early as September 1. Cases could also occur along the Atlantic flyway, where there is a high concentration of commercial poultry operations.

Based on the impact of cases from December 2014 to June 2015 – 232 commercial and backyard flocks affected, nearly 50 million birds killed – it is essential that USDA prepare quickly and comprehensively for a large number of HPAI detections. That includes assessing the level of preparedness among States and industry, including producers, and what equipment, personnel, or other resources our partners have for response activities. Further, transmission of infection can be minimized through biosecurity at farms. This collection activity will determine the biosecurity measures in place and bolster plans to implement additional biosecurity measures.

This data is needed as soon as possible to help APHIS carry out its mission of preventing, controlling, and eradicating animal disease. Delaying the collection of this data could slow down affected flock depopulation, which is necessary to slow and ultimately halt spread of the disease. Poultry producers want flocks depopulated as quickly as possible to reduce negative impacts on their businesses in the event of an HPAI detection. APHIS expects significant economic harm to the industry due to bird and egg production losses and because of eroding confidence among both domestic and international stakeholders. As the disease has spread, with concurrent media attention, negative trade impacts have increased. Trading partners are beginning to restrict not only live animals, but also animal-derived products and byproducts.

This emergency information collection activity will be used to help APHIS, the States, and industry to plan and prepare for a fall HPAI outbreak by:

- Identifying the amount and location of equipment and supplies needed for depopulation and disposal of poultry, and cleaning and disinfection of contaminated facilities.
- Identifying the number and location of State and industry personnel capable of assisting in a response by category.
- Identifying usable disposal sites.
- Identifying potential barriers to rapid depopulation or disposal so they can be addressed.
- Assessing biosecurity and actions being taken to improve biosecurity.
- Assessing response capability and actions being taken to improve response capacity.
- Gathering key contacts by State for response activities.

Approval to collect this information is needed immediately to protect the North American poultry population from the continued spread of HPAI and to allow for better understanding of how to reduce the effect of this disease agent.

Thank you for your time and consideration.