



ANIMAL SCIENCE

Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources

# UNL POULTRY NEWS

## Upcoming Activities:

UNL Chick Days, March 22—UNL Animal Science Complex

Nebraska Poultry Conference, March 6—Top Golf and Omaha Marriott Regency, Omaha

Winter, 2025

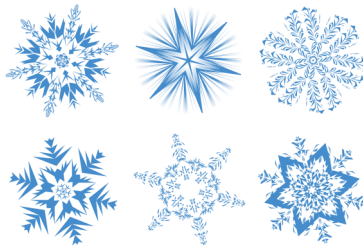
## Newsletter Editor:

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## Is there a relationship between escalating egg prices and High Pathogenic Avian Influenza?

Egg prices are at an all-time high—\$5-6/carton at the grocery store with organic/cage free even higher. Could this be due to an on-going battle with Avian Influenza in our poultry flocks—YES, it is very much due to an on-going spread of HPAI in our country. Since January 2024, we have lost near 10% of the National laying hen flock and California has lost 52% of their laying hen flock due to mass depopulations to control the spread of Avian Influenza from infected flocks. So why have prices escalated so much with only 10% less supply?? Part of it's a function of supply/demand and the other factors include time and \$\$ to clean-up after a AI break, disposal of the birds, and then it takes 5-6 months to grow a replacement pullet ready to produce eggs. In the meantime the National flock ages and eggs become more fragile as hens age (cracked eggshells in cartons). Pullet houses available to grow more pullets are not always available in the part of the U.S. where the hens infected with AI were depopulated. So it all becomes more complicated than what meets the eye.



Control of HPAI in the U.S. is also complicated by availability and acceptance of a vaccine as well as the political pressures on APHIS to not distribute a vaccine and to stay with their policy of control by depopulation. USDA-APHIS has tried to control the spread of AI by mass depopulation of whole complexes of hens when AI is detected in the flock since 2015. Historically and presently HPAI has spread globally through migrating waterfowl. But since 2022, the new H5N1 strains have also spread through song birds and mammals (note Dairy cattle outbreak in 2024) ; which unfortunately the policies of depopulation can no longer contain. Transmission to humans working closely with contaminated birds and mammals has also now been documented in the United States.

A vaccine for H5N1 has been developed in other countries (Europe) and is utilized by numerous countries to control outbreaks of HPAI. APHIS has not approved use of the vaccine in the US primarily due to pressures from the broiler sector not wanting (even safe) antibodies in broiler meat which could restrict exports to some countries. Previously the US broiler industry has not had many outbreaks of AI but cases are being reported in broiler house now. In the words of Dr. Simon Shane's (DVM, Epidemiologist) recent EGG-NEWS commentary "The extent of losses among laying hens and other commercial poultry and the extensive cost borne disproportionately by the private sector, producers and consumers should result in a reevaluation of policy by the USDA-APHIS regard to vaccination". The control of HPAI in multiple species can be augmented by vaccines .

In the meantime, both commercial and backyard producers have to vigilantly practice strict biosecurity standards for their flocks. Keep your birds inside and away from migrating waterfowl and wild bird excrement and dander.

Written by Sheila Purdum, Extension Poultry Specialist



2025 UNL Chick Days—March 22  
8:30-2:00 pm  
Dept. of Animal Sci., Univ. Nebraska

*An educational event for small and back-yard poultry producers and youth featuring speakers on the following topics:*

**8:30 Registration** Dept. of Animal Science, University of Nebraska, Student Commons, 3940 Fair St. (Contact Sheila Purdum at [spurdum2@unl.edu](mailto:spurdum2@unl.edu) for early registration/questions)

**9:00 Presentations - Room B101**

*Talk 1: Waterfowl Management*—Cole Meador, Assistant Extension Educator, Saunders County, Mead, Nebraska

*Talk 2: Essentials of Composting for Small Flock Poultry Waste Management*- Ashley Bigge, M.S. Penn State Extension, Extension Educator, Penn State University,

Break

*Talk 3: "Breeding for Show and Showing in Open Classes"* - Brett Kreifels, Extension Educator, Leader, Douglas Sarpy Counties, Omaha, Nebraska

*Talk 4: "Preparing and Delivering Knock-Out Reasons"* - Sarah Vos, UNL Horse Judging Team coach and UNL Graduate Student Animal Science

**Noon**—Lunch Break, Free Omelets— Animal Science Commons

**1:00 Contest Winners Announcement—B101**

**1:15 Quiz Bowl Contest—B101**

**Contests:** Egg Art , Photography— Adult & Youth and Quiz Bowl

Photography - bring a 8 X 10 photo of your favorite bird/and or bird scene etc. Youth or Adult (Put name, Youth or Adult and email and phone contact info on the back upper right hand corner of photo)

Awards in the following Categories: Youth or Adult, Division Prizes: 1st—\$30; 2nd—\$20; 3rd—\$10

Egg Art: Bring single decorated egg of any size for display in a labeled egg carton. Youth or

## UNL Poultry Interest Team Contacts

Animal Science Dept: Sheila Purdum, Ph.D. (Co-Leader)  
Gary Sullivan, Ph.D.  
Mary Beck, Ph.D. (Emeriti)  
Ruth Wiowode, Ph.D.  
Yijie Xiong, Ph.D.

Veterinary Science: Don Reynolds, DVM (Co-Leader)  
Roberto Cortinas, DVM

Food Science: Kaustav Majumder, Ph.D.  
Byron Chaves, Ph.D.  
Bing Wang, Ph.D.

Ag. Engineering: Rick Stowell, Ph.D  
Amy Schmidt, Ph.D.  
Tami Brown-Brandl, Ph.D.

Extension Educator: Brett Kreifels, M.S.



NPI Conference Room—C202 Animal Science, Remodel sponsored by NPI