



## agriculture, land reform & rural development

Department:  
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### MEDIA RELEASE

## OUTBREAK OF AVIAN INFLUENZA (AI) ON A COMMERCIAL CHICKEN-LAYER FARM IN GAUTENG

13 APRIL 2021

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development would like to report on an outbreak of avian influenza (AI) on a commercial farm in Ekurhuleni, Gauteng.

Approximately 300 birds died of AI influenza on this commercial chicken-layer farm. The samples from this farm that were sent to the laboratory tested positive for the H5 strain of AI. It must be said that this farm was also part of the H5N8 highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreak in 2017.

Upon confirmation that it was H5, the birds in the affected house were immediately destroyed. Arrangements were made for samples to be urgently tested at Onderstepoort Veterinary Research (OVR), to determine the pathotype (whether it is high (HPAI) or low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI)) as well as to determine the N type of the virus. The results have not yet come back.

The Gauteng Veterinary Authorities placed the farm under quarantine and are busy with an investigation of the outbreak. They are performing back and forward tracing, to determine the extent of the outbreak and assist with safe disposal of dead chickens and disinfection of the farm.

Poultry farmers have to be on the lookout for signs of disease that may indicate AI and report any suspicion to the nearest State Veterinarian for immediate investigation. The following signs are commonly seen in birds infected with HPAI:

- Quietness and extreme depression;
- Sudden drop in production of eggs, many of which are soft-shelled or shell-less;
- Wattle and combs become red and swollen;
- Swelling of the skin under the eyes;
- Coughing, sneezing and nervousness signs;
- Diarrhea;
- Haemorrhages (blood spots) on the hock;
- A few deaths may occur over several days, followed by rapid spread of disease and deaths up to 100% within 48 hours.

All poultry farmers, as well as those with birds kept for a hobby or zoo purposes, are encouraged to implement the following biosecurity measures:

- Keep birds away from areas that are visited by wild birds;
- Control access of people and equipment to poultry houses;
- Avoid provision of water and food in a way that may attract wild birds; Rather feed free-range birds undercover or inside a confined structure;
- Maintain proper disinfection of the property, poultry houses and equipment;
- Avoid the introduction of birds of unknown disease status into your flock(s);
- Report illnesses and deaths of birds to your responsible State or Private Veterinarian;

- Implement procedures for safe disposal of manure and dead birds.

DALRRD was also notified of large wild bird die offs in Stutterheim in the Eastern Cape. Samples from chickens that were collected at the end of March 2021 in two villages in Stutterheim tested negative (disease not present) for Newcastle disease and avian influenza. Follow-up investigations are ongoing.

**-END-**

Issued by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development:

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