UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

2025 Resolution
129th Annual Meeting
Oct. 30 - Nov. 5 , 2025
Denver, CO

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 10 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON POULTRY AND OTHER AVIAN SPECIES

SUBJECT MATTER: Need for Epidemiological Data for Current H5 Influenza Epizootic

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RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) strongly urges the Secretary of Agriculture to provide resources to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Agricultural Research Service to significantly increase investment in comprehensive epidemiological disease investigations for H5 influenza in cattle herds, poultry flocks and additional livestock industries. Furthermore, the findings should be shared in a timely manner with industry for actionable follow-up. USAHA further encourages USDA-APHIS to prioritize collaborative efforts between the National Poultry Improvement Plan, dairy and beef cattle industry stakeholders, additional livestock industries, and state animal health officials to ensure coordinated, data-driven disease control efforts across species and sectors.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The current H5 avian influenza epizootic, which began in 2022, has been managed using control strategies developed during the 2014–2015 United States outbreak. However, significant changes in the virus—including increased virulence, broader species adaptation, and frequent spillover events—have rendered previous approaches less effective. Unlike the 2015 outbreak, the ongoing situation is marked by repeated point-source introductions from wild birds into domestic animal populations, underscoring the limitations of depopulation (“stamping out”) strategies for both commercial and backyard flocks.

The emergence of H5 influenza infection in dairy cattle since 2024 has further complicated disease prevention efforts, particularly within the poultry industry. Despite the scale and complexity of the current outbreak, there has been a notable lack of coordinated epidemiological investigation into virus transmission dynamics—both since the initial poultry detections in 2022 and following its confirmed spread to cattle. This gap has contributed to the loss of millions of birds, with limited understanding of the factors driving transmission.

Producers face mounting pressure to prevent disease spread, often with limited financial resources to independently enhance biosecurity. Actionable, data-driven recommendations are urgently needed to guide targeted interventions. Such efforts are essential for identifying evolving disease threats and strategically informing and strengthening biosecurity measures necessary for the prevention and early mitigation of this dynamic animal and human health

risk. As H5 influenza remains a United States Department of Agriculture-controlled pathogen, producers rely on government agencies for critical information related to controlled challenge studies, viral genomic data, and epidemiological fieldwork. Current response strategies frequently depend on outdated or inconsistent control measures, despite clear evidence of viral evolution.

While the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) biosecurity principles and auditing processes remain foundational to disease prevention, timely and robust epidemiological data are essential to adapt biosecurity guidance to the realities of a changing and increasingly complex disease landscape.