RESOLUTION NUMBER: 12 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON POULTRY AND OTHER AVIAN SPECIES

SUBJECT MATTER: H5N1 INFLUENZA IN CATTLE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Since the March 25, 2024, detection of influenza virus type A, genotype H5N1, clade B3.13 in a Texas dairy cattle herd, the virus has been detected in hundreds of cattle herds in 16 states. Spillover of this virus has occurred into commercial and backyard poultry flocks. The virus has also been detected in humans.

To minimize the impact of this H5 influenza virus on the health and welfare of poultry and to protect human health, the American Association of Avian Pathologists has identified several policy issues and gaps that should be immediately addressed:

- The narrow requirement of pre-movement testing of only lactating dairy cows moving interstate is inadequate and overlooks risks that other classes of cattle pose to poultry. This approach does not sufficiently mitigate the risk to turkeys, broilers, and egg laying hens near infected dairies.

- A national strategy that targets all potential hosts of H5 influenza is lacking and has led to continual spread of the virus.

- As this is an emerging outbreak, insufficient data have been available to identify transmission pathways and associated risk factors for H5 influenza spread (i.e., spread between dairies and poultry farms).

- The extensive and rapid dissemination of H5 influenza in dairy herds has created a new source of virus in livestock populations. Vaccination is an important tool to reduce disease spread within dairies and to other animals (i.e. poultry, swine, cats, etc.)

- The occurrence of H5 influenza in a new livestock species increases the demand for lab capacity, producer financial support, and veterinary resources.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association strongly urges the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Services to lead the coordination of all livestock sectors, state animal health officials, and public health officials to develop and implement a consistent and comprehensive strategy for H5 influenza management. The strategy should include these elements:

- Risk-based regional surveillance to efficiently generate the data needed to understand risks and to mitigate them with consistent control strategies.
- Adherence to science-based principles of disease control to reduce further spread of H5 influenza.
- Epidemiologic studies and tools to understand connections among susceptible populations.
- Resolution of concerns, such as trade, that impede the utilization of vaccine needed to control the spread of H5 influenza.
- Additional resource allocation to minimize the long-term impacts of H5 influenza on human health, food security, and economic sustainability.

FINAL RESPONSE:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the concerns of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and appreciates the opportunity to respond.

APHIS, state responders, and allied industry partners have documented additional "spillover" events of HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b virus (heretofore HPAI) from wild birds into dairy cattle, which is not unexpected in the context of the ongoing global epizootic situation of the virus disseminated from wild birds to poultry and other mammals. APHIS continues coordinating poultry and dairy livestock responses with states and allied industries.

The United States continues to implement a "stamping out" response to poultry HPAI detections and movement restrictions in other impacted species, to limit disease spread and ultimately eliminate circulating virus in domestic species. National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) laboratories and APHIS continue to offer testing for all species (including wild birds and mammals) to quickly detect the virus and better understand its transmission.

APHIS has published two Federal Orders to increase surveillance for HPAI virus in the national dairy herd and decrease interstate spread of the virus. The National Milk Testing Strategy (NMTS) implemented following the December Federal Order facilitates

comprehensive surveillance of the nation's milk supply and dairy herds to mitigate the spread of the virus without disruptions to the production, processing, and sale of pasteurized milk and milk products. Additionally, there is the voluntary Dairy Herd Status Program to help ease the burden of testing for herds that move interstate frequently. Financial support mechanisms for dairy producers are also available and information can be found here.

The NMTS includes a combination of dairy processing plant silo monitoring and state-specific surveillance, and ongoing testing for case investigation and response. Testing and surveillance activities are based on each state's dairy industry and HPAI status. States use the NMTS to demonstrate Unaffected State status. The benefits of the NMTS is evident by the detection of two independent spillovers of the D1.1 genotype in dairy herds in New Mexico and Arizona and additional detections of the B3.13 genotype in Idaho. This also provides a justification to continue the NMTS at a monthly basis for unaffected states especially through the upcoming fall waterfowl migration. The NMTS state statuses can be found here.

In addition to conducting expert epidemiological and phylogenetic analysis to better understand the virus, and sharing that information globally, APHIS continually encourages and evaluates innovative disease response or prevention strategies that might bolster our work in protecting poultry and livestock health through science-based measures. This year, USDA APHIS invested $100 million d to explore prevention, therapeutics, research, and potential vaccine candidates to identify and foster innovative solutions to fight HPAI.