UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

2026 Resolution

130th Annual Meeting
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Madison, WI

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 15 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON POULTRY AND OTHER AVIAN SPECIES

SUBJECT MATTER: Request for Progress on the United States Department of Agriculture Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Poultry Vaccination Strategy

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RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) release a draft highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) poultry vaccination strategy for public comment before the end of 2026. USAHA further requests that USDA stress-test the draft strategy by working with the egg and turkey industries and other appropriate stakeholders to conduct: (1) a tabletop exercise that addresses, among other issues, traceability and the movement of vaccines and vaccinated birds across jurisdictions; (2) a pilot commercial turkey vaccination project; and (3) a pilot commercial egg-layer vaccination project. Lessons learned from the tabletop exercise and pilot projects can be used to inform a final strategy to be issued publicly by the end of 2027.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has become endemic in United States (US) wild bird populations and routinely results in incursions into commercial poultry operations. HPAI has caused illness and the depopulation of more than 206,253,164 commercial and backyard birds. Of this total, 161,807,500 table egg chickens and 22,737,760 turkeys have been depopulated from 2022 to the present.[1]

The US HPAI prevention and response strategy has not changed to meet this new reality. Rather than continuing to rely on biosecurity and stamping out alone, incorporating an appropriate vaccination strategy can improve animal welfare, prevent human infections, reduce environmental contamination and lateral spread, safeguard food security and growers' livelihoods, and protect the health and psychological well-being of farmers and HPAI responders.

[1] USDA APHIS. Confirmations of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Commercial and Backyard Flocks. https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/commercial-backyard-flocks

Numerous lawmakers have called upon the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to prioritize a vaccination strategy.[2] In addition, in 2025, USAHA passed a resolution encouraging the Secretary of Agriculture to provide the US poultry industry with its plan for "next steps toward an H5 influenza vaccination strategy (e.g., surveillance plans) in poultry."[3]

USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) responded that the use of HPAI vaccines is not authorized but that USDA-APHIS is exploring strategies to address HPAI, "including possible vaccination and other emerging approaches," and that "APHIS has gathered input from domestic stakeholders on the feasibility, costs, and other considerations associated with potential strategies under development." USDA-APHIS stated that the agency shared a draft vaccination strategy with state animal health officials and a limited number of industry partners for review and comment and that their feedback was incorporated into a second draft, which would be shared "more broadly once the Secretary of Agriculture authorizes wider distribution."
In December 2025, 23 senators sent a bipartisan letter to the Secretary urging her department to advance the strategy review process "with speed and diligence." As we approach the end of 2026, the second draft remains unreleased. The lack of a broadly available plan, including one available to the public, has limited stakeholders' ability to engage productively with USDA and advance viable solutions to the challenges of implementing a poultry vaccination program.

Numerous practical issues related to implementation remain unresolved, including appropriate planning for interstate controls; the movement of vaccines and vaccinated birds across jurisdictions; the international management of products from vaccinated and unvaccinated birds; and traceability within the poultry industry. The turkey industry has limited data to inform planning; therefore, a pilot vaccination effort and tabletop exercise designed to identify implementation challenges could inform the finalization and publication of the strategy. Decision-making triggers addressing whether, when, and how to implement a vaccination plan could also be incorporated into the strategy.

[2] U.S. Senate members to the Honorable Brooke Rollins regarding an avian influenza vaccination strategy, December 11, 2025; U.S. Senate members to the Honorable Brooke Rollins regarding the department's HPAI response, February 18, 2025; U.S. House of Representatives members to the Honorable Brooke Rollins regarding the department's HPAI response, February 18, 2025.

[3] U.S. Animal Health Association. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Update. Committee on Poultry and Other Avian Species. 2025. https://usaha.org/usaha-resolutions/#:~:text=Secretary%20of%20Agriculture-,12,-Approved