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For Immediate Release
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Protect Your Back Yard Poultry

Fall is on the way and Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is reminding backyard poultry owners to take extra precautions this fall as migratory birds move through the area. Wild waterfowl, such as ducks and geese, can carry Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), also called bird flu. These wild birds can be infected without appearing sick and can spread the virus to domestic chickens, ducks, and turkeys.

“Avian influenza is a serious disease that can cause high death rates in poultry flocks,” states Melissa Propp, Clinic Manager at SWNPHD. “Simple steps can go a long way in keeping your birds safe.”

Tips to Protect Your Flock:

- **Keep wild birds away:** Avoid attracting wild ducks and geese by cleaning up spilled feed and keeping poultry away from ponds or other open water sources.
- **Restrict access:** Limit visitors to your coop and do not share equipment or supplies with other bird owners.
- **Separate new or returning birds:** Quarantine any new poultry for at least 30 days before adding them to your flock.
- **Monitor bird health:** Watch for illness in birds such as runny diarrhea, eating or drinking less, decrease in egg production, or unexpected deaths.
- **Notify your veterinarian:** If you have sick birds in your flock contact your veterinarian right away.

There have also been rare cases of humans being infected with bird flu. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this year there have been 26 human cases of Avian Influenza in 7 countries outside of the United States, resulting in 11 deaths. There have been 70 probable or confirmed human cases of Avian Influenza in the US since 2024, with one death reported.

Tips to Protect Yourself

- **Wash up:** Always wash your hands and change footwear before and after handling your birds.
- **Take off your shoes:** Leave any shoes worn while taking care of poultry outside.
- **Keep birds outside:** Do not let backyard poultry live inside the house, especially where food or drinks are kept.

- **Stay Outdoors:** Clean any equipment or tools outside, not inside your house, such as food dishes, water dishes, and cages.
- **Don't touch sick or dead birds:** Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) like gloves, masks, and shoe covers if you need to work with any items that may have been contaminated with their body fluids, saliva or feces. Items that could be contaminated are water sources, litter, feces or any surface that could have been touched by a sick or dying bird.

“Backyard flocks are an important source of food and enjoyment for many families,” Propp added. “By taking precautions during migratory bird season, you can help protect your birds and prevent the spread of disease.”

For more information about avian influenza and back yard poultry, visit [cdc.gov/birdflu](https://www.cdc.gov/birdflu) or contact SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow us on Facebook, You Tube, and Instagram or view the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health.

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