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Showcase Your Season with #Plant2022

This planting season let's highlight the innovation and leadership demonstrated by conservation-minded farmers in our #Plant2022 campaign. We'll share your photos and stories on social media, blogs, and a nationwide storymap.

Learn more (<https://go.usa.gov/xuTqj>)

2022 Avian Influenza in the United States - What you need to know!

To date, USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories has confirmed the presence of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in commercial and backyard flocks in several states including Connecticut. Avian influenza viruses are classified as either "low pathogenic (LPAI)" or "highly pathogenic (HPAI)" based on their genetic features and the severity of the disease they cause in poultry. Caused by an influenza type A virus, HPAI can infect poultry (such as chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, domestic ducks, geese, and guinea fowl) and wild birds (especially waterfowl).

The clinical signs of birds affected with all forms of Avian Influenza may show one or more of the following:

- Sudden death without clinical signs
- Decreased water consumption up to 72 hours before other clinical signs

- Lack of energy and appetite
- Decreased egg production
- Soft-shelled or misshapen eggs
- Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, and hocks
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs
- Nasal discharge
- Coughing, sneezing
- Lack of coordination
- Diarrhea

In addition to the disease infecting domestic birds, it is important to know that wild birds can also be infected and show no signs of illness. They can carry the disease to new areas when migrating, potentially exposing domestic poultry to the virus. The [APHIS' wild bird surveillance program](#) provides an early warning system for the introduction and distribution of avian influenza viruses of concern in the United States, allowing APHIS and the poultry industry to take timely and rapid action.

With the recent detections of avian influenza in wild birds and domestic poultry in the United States, bird owners should review their biosecurity practices and stay vigilant to protect poultry and pet birds from transmission of this disease. The following bio-safety guidelines are effective methods for safeguarding commercial operations and smaller flocks:

- Backyard flock owners should practice strict biosecurity, including preventing birds from exposure and/or co-mingling with wild birds and other types of poultry.
- Shower, change clothes, and clean and disinfect footwear before entering your poultry housing areas.
- Respiratory protection such as a medical facemask would also be important and remember to always wear clean clothes when encountering healthy domestic birds.
- Carefully follow safe entry and exit procedures into your flock's clean area.
- Reduce the attractiveness for wild birds to stop at your place by cleaning up litter and spilled feed around poultry housing areas.
- If you have free range guinea fowl and waterfowl, consider bringing them into coops or flight pens under nets to prevent interaction of domesticated poultry with wild birds and their droppings.
- It is best to restrict visitors from interacting with your birds currently.
- Do not touch sick or dead wildlife and keep them away from domestic poultry
- Try not to handle sick or deceased domestic birds (if you must, use proper personal protective equipment to minimize direct contact and cautiously disinfect anything that comes into contact with the deceased and or sick bird).

As part of the existing USDA Avian Influenza response plans, Federal and State partners as well as industry are responding quickly and decisively to these outbreaks by following these five basic steps:

- **Quarantine** – restricting movement of poultry and poultry-moving equipment into and out of the control area;
- **Eradicate** – depopulate the affected flock(s);
- **Monitor region** – testing wild and domestic birds in a broad area around the quarantine area;
- **Disinfect** – kills the virus in the affected flock locations; and
- **Test** – confirming that the poultry farm is AI virus-free.

Sick or deceased domestic birds should be reported to your local veterinarian. Positive domestic cases are handled by APHIS and its partners. States that have confirmed cases of Avian Influenza should work closely with USDA-APHIS on surveillance, reporting and control efforts. Disposal methods will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis depending on a variety of factors, including the size of the flock, space requirements, associated costs, local conditions, and applicable laws/regulations.

The United States has the strongest Avian Influenza surveillance program in the world, where we actively look for the disease and provide fair market value compensation to affected producers to encourage reporting.

If you do not raise domestic birds or have a poultry operation but you encounter sick or dead wild birds, please use bio-safety measures, and report your findings through USDA's toll-free number at 1-866-536-7593.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, this strain of Avian Influenza is a low risk to the public. While the transmission rate from animals to humans is low, it is a zoonotic disease, meaning it can be shared between species. To learn more about Avian Influenza and to remain up to date on the latest related news and information, you can visit the [USDAAPHIS webpage](#).

USDA Reminds State Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports

Agricultural producers in Connecticut who have not yet completed their [crop acreage reports](#) after planting should make an appointment with their Farm Service Agency (FSA) office before the applicable deadline.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch and its intended uses. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.

How to File a Report

Acreage reporting dates vary by crop and by county. Contact your local FSA office for a list of acreage reporting deadlines by crop.

Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some [USDA Service Centers](#) are open to limited visitors. Contact your Service Center to set up an in-person or phone appointment.

To file a crop acreage report, you will need to provide:

- Crop and crop type or variety.
- Intended use of the crop.
- Number of acres of the crop.
- Map with approximate boundaries for the crop.
- Planting date(s).
- Planting pattern, when applicable.
- Producer shares.
- Irrigation practice(s).
- Acreage prevented from planting, when applicable.
- Other information as required.

Acreage Reporting Details

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were unable to plant. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA's Risk Management Agency.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP-covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

More Information

For questions, please contact your local FSA office. To locate your local FSA office visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

Getting Acreage Reporting Right

You have a lot at stake in making sure your crop insurance acreage reporting is accurate and on time. If you fail to report on time, you may not be protected. If you report too much acreage, you may pay too much premium. If you report too little acreage, you may recover less when you file a claim.

Crop insurance agents often say that mistakes in acreage reporting are the easiest way for producers to have an unsatisfactory experience with crop insurance. Don't depend on your agent to do this important job for you. Your signature on the bottom of the acreage reporting form makes it, legally, your responsibility. Double-check it for yourself.

Remember - acreage reporting is your responsibility. Doing it right will save you money. Always get a copy of your report immediately after signing and filing it with your agent and keep it with your records. Remember, it is your responsibility to report crop damage to your agent within 72 hours of discovery. Never put damaged acreage to another use without prior written consent of the insurance adjuster. You don't want to destroy any evidence of a possible claim. [Learn more by visiting RMA's website.](#)

Maintaining ARC/PLC Acreage

If you're enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, you must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. By signing ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts, you agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If you fail to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on your farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate your contract for the program year.

USDA Accepting New or Modified Proposals for the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is welcoming new and modified proposals from conservation partners for the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative, a part of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) focused on effectively managing wildlife habitat. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has expanded available practices under this initiative in response to feedback from partners.

Through SAFE, producers and landowners restore vital habitat in alignment with high-priority state wildlife conservation goals. Specifically, landowners establish wetlands, grasses, and trees. These practices are designed to enhance important wildlife populations by creating critical habitat and food sources. They also protect soil and water health by working as a barrier to sediment and nutrient run-off before they reach waterways.

Expanded Practices

To help improve the planning and implementation of the SAFE initiative, FSA is adding two new practices with the assistance of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), FSA's sister agency. In partnership with FSA, NRCS employees across the country provide CRP participants with critical conservation planning assistance, which will now include managing for early successional habitat cover establishment or management, as well as wildlife habitat planting. These additional eligible practices will enable SAFE partners to better target a wide variety of wildlife species, such as the Northern bobwhite, lesser prairie-chicken, and the New England cottontail.

As part of this year's SAFE signup, FSA will also authorize cost-share assistance for producers who would like to re-enroll acres in CRP but need assistance updating their vegetative cover to align with NRCS practice standards for early successional habitat or wildlife planting.

Submitting Proposals

Eligible entities for SAFE include government entities, non-profits, or private organizations.

Additionally, partners with SAFE projects with both General and Continuous CRP practices must submit modified proposals to continue in the program.

New and modified proposals for SAFE projects must be submitted to the FSA State Office in Tolland in June. Contact your State Office for the state-specific deadline. More information on developing proposals is available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

More Information

SAFE is part of the Continuous CRP signup, and producers can begin enrolling in new or updated SAFE programs beginning October 1, 2022. Meanwhile, the Continuous and Grassland signups are currently open, and producers can learn more by contacting their local [USDA Service Center](#). To learn more about SAFE and its benefits, see the initiative's [fact sheet](#).

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits.

CRP complements other USDA conservation programs, including several programs offered by NRCS for working lands and conservation easements. Earlier this month, NRCS released its [Northern Bobwhite, Grasslands and Savannas Framework for Conservation Action](#) to help guide voluntary conservation work over the next five years across 25 states, including over 7 million acres of new conservation practices on productive, working lands, and will contribute to the Biden-Harris administration's efforts to make our nation a leader on climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience. The plan will accelerate voluntary conservation efforts for the Northern bobwhite quail and the grassland and savanna landscapes that the species calls home.

Connecticut / State FSA Office

344 Merrow Road, Suite B
Tolland, CT 06084-3917

Phone: 860-871-4090
Fax: 855-934-2463

State Executive Director:
Dr. Emily Cole

State Office Staff:

Nathan Wilson, *District Director*
Jule Dybdahl, *Administrative Officer*
Sarah Fournier, *Program Specialist*
Rebecca Palmer, *Program Specialist*
Claire Vaterlaus-Staby, *Administrative Specialist*

State Committee Chair:
Vacant

State Committee Members:
Susan G. Pronovost
Other Members Vacant