



**Avian Influenza**  
**Policy Development 2015**

**Issue:**

With confirmed cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in the United States, the time is now for discussions about how agriculture deals with a devastating issue. The virus could be catastrophic for the Southeast and Tennessee's poultry industry. The Tennessee Department of Agriculture and much of industry have turned their attention to mitigating a potential and what some consider eminent outbreak.

**Questions:**

1. How should Farm Bureau work with regulatory agencies to relieve regulatory pressure during a potential outbreak?
2. What measures should be taken to protect producer privacy during HPAI preparations?
3. Can other precautionary or reactionary steps be taken to prepare for an outbreak?

**Background:**

Highly pathogenic avian influenza is a rapidly spreading viral disease found in poultry animals. Until earlier this year, when the influenza was confirmed in a chicken operation, the virus had only been detected in Turkey flocks. HPAI has been found in three of the country's major flyways, the Pacific, Central, and Mississippi flyways. Control of the virus can come through limiting access to farms and limiting exposure to wild animals. The downtime following confirmed cases and other obvious economic setbacks could devastate the poultry sector. Mitigating public reaction to any potential outbreak also presents a new and unique set of challenges.

Twenty-one states have found birds diagnosed with the virus. In three states, a state of emergency has been declared by the governor or legislative body. The virus has not been found in Tennessee, however, it has been detected in Arkansas, the closest and only southeastern state. HPAI struggles to live in warm weather so most states have seen the virus dissipate this summer. The challenge now becomes preparing for cool weather when outbreaks are expected.

Detection, depopulation and disposal are the most important components of controlling an outbreak. Humane yet responsive euthanasia is an ongoing debate as well as what to do with animals after depopulation. In-house composting, outside composting and burial seem to be the most popular means of disposal. However, a variety of factors such as water quality needs to be considered before disposal plans are made.

The Tennessee Department of agriculture is finalizing its plans to deal with a potential outbreak. It began new requirements for birds entering the state on August 1. The department has requested the physical address of every poultry house in the state. It plans to use the information to help formulate outbreak biosecurity plans to contain the disease as well as possible. Also, the department will ask every operation and integrator to work together and develop a security plan to deal with a potential outbreak.

## **TFBF Policy (Partial)**

We recommend integrators and growers work together to practice all possible bio-security methods to help prevent disease. We recommend integrators notify all producers of any contagious diseases in their area.