

Avian Influenza in Live Poultry Markets

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The 1983-1984 outbreak of avian influenza type H5N2 that occurred in the poultry industry of Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Jersey, and Maryland, was eradicated by fall 1984 at a cost of nearly \$65 million. Unfortunately, H5N2 Influenza virus was found again in Pennsylvania in January 1986 in poultry destined for live markets in major northern cities. Such markets display live chickens, turkeys, guinea fowl, pheasants, chukars, domestic ducks, geese, etc., for the customer to select prior to slaughter. The market system associated with this activity is an intricate web of retail markets, poultry auctions, wholesale dealers, and farm flocks. The poultry can be moved by at least 5 different channels from the farm to market, and birds may change hands up to 5 times before reaching the consumer. Prior to the more recent outbreak, pens and crates were rarely disinfected, and shippers often exchanged equipment. As a result, multiple foci of infection were discovered in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. Presently, animal health officials are aggressively combating the disease through slaughter of infected birds and disinfection of premises.

In what appears to be an entirely separate incident, a different strain of H5N2 avian influenza virus was found in quail on a farm in Oregon. The affected flock contained 110,000 quail, 7,000 pheasants, 9,000 chickens, and small numbers of ducks and pigeons. Fortunately, the Oregon birds will be killed for restaurants instead of being used for shooting purposes. From a wildlife management perspective, the most disturbing factor in these recent events is the presence of avian influenza virus in game bird species. The distinction between game birds destined for the table through live bird markets and game birds being propagated for shooting may be seasonal and dependent only on the relative profit available to the propagators. Given the complexity of the market system for live bird sales, the possibility that some groups of hunting preserve birds have been exposed cannot be dismissed. In most instances, pen-reared upland game birds are classified as poultry, and therefore primary authority for associated health problems resides with state and federal agricultural officials. State fish and wildlife agencies also are involved by regulating the possession, propagation, release, and shooting of these birds. Members of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies have been advised of recent events and encouraged to work in cooperation with state and federal animal health agencies in combating the disease.