High-path flu spreads to poultry belt

By TIM LUNDEEN

FOLLOWING the March 5 announcement of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in a commercial breeding turkey flock in west-central Minnesota (Feedstuffs, March 9), the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed the presence of HPAI in two separate commercial turkey flocks in Missouri and one turkey flock in northwestern Arkansas.

To date, in all four flocks, the H5N2 strain of HPAI was found, marking the first occurrence of the strain in the Mississippi flyway.

In all cases, APHIS is working with local and state authorities on joint incident responses, including quarantining affected premises, culling surviving birds on those premises and testing nearby premises and testing nearby.

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention considers the risk to people from these HPAI H5 infections in wild birds, backyard flocks and HPAI outbreaks in poultry to be low.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service Laboratories in Ames, Iowa, confirmed the presence of the strain in the Missouri flocks, confirming the presence of the strain in the Missouri flocks, confirming the presence of the strain in the Missouri flocks. APHIS said the flock had experienced increased mortality.

The affected flock in Boone County, Ark., had 40,020 turkeys. APHIS said the flock had experienced increased mortality.

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Iowa utility sues ag drainage districts

Farmers worry litigation will impede collaborative, voluntary approach to addressing water quality issues.

By JACQUI FATKA

DES Moines Water Works has elected to pursue litigation against farmers and their drainage districts more than 100 miles away from Des Moines, Iowa, saying high levels of nitrates in groundwater runoff threaten the water supply for customers who depend on it for drinking water.

“The role of agricultural drainage as a direct pipeline of nitrate pollution into our streams and rivers and the harm it has caused our state and nation is measurable and significant,” Des Moines Water Works claimed in its Jan. 9 notice of intent to sue.

Des Moines Water Works is a regional water utility that provides drinking water to approximately 500,000 Iowa residents, drawing most of its raw water supply from the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers.

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, Des Moines Water Works said it is obligated to meet the Environmental Protection Agency’s standards for maximum contaminant levels (MCL) in finished drinking water. The MCL standard for nitrate is 10 mg per liter. Des Moines Water Works recently upstream water monitoring at 77 sample sites in Sac County found nitrate levels as high as 39.2 mg per liter in groundwater discharged by drainage districts. Both the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers experienced extremely high concentrations in the spring and summer of 2013, the fall of 2014 and this winter.

Nitrate levels above the MCL standard increase the cost of drinking water treatment for customers, Des Moines Water Works said.

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USMARC animal studies on hold

By JACQUI FATKA

New research projects will begin at the Roman L. Hruska U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (USMARC) in Clay Center, Neb., until new protocols are implemented to address concerns over the welfare of animals at the center.

USMARC is a 33,000-acre research facility that houses swine, sheep and beef cattle and includes numerous pasture areas and crop fields.

Animal Research: These cattle were part of the germplasm evaluation project at the Roman L. Hruska U.S. Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center, Neb.

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