

 **NEWS RELEASE**

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs  
4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD 20737-1232 • Voice (301) 734-7799 • Web: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>

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Madelaine Fletcher (301)734-6125

Suzanne Bond (301) 734-5175

### **APHIS AMENDS NATIONAL POULTRY IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

WASHINGTON, March 31, 2009--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is amending the sampling and testing procedures in the voluntary National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP). The changes will keep the provisions of the plan current with advancements in the poultry industry.

Specifically, APHIS is increasing the number of approved tests for avian influenza (AI) used in breeding and commercial poultry from two to four. The two additional tests can provide highly specific results quickly, making them extremely useful as screening tests for AI and as part of an initial state response and containment plan in the event of an outbreak. Any positive test results would continue to be confirmed by federal reference laboratories and an official determination of a flock as positive for the H5 or H7 subtypes of AI would be made only by APHIS' National Veterinary Services Laboratories.

In addition, APHIS will increase the frequency of required AI tests to 90-day intervals instead of 180-day intervals. This increase in testing will enhance U.S. flock health and help to maintain the U.S. classification of "avian influenza clean" for parent egg and meat-type chicken and turkey breeding flocks. APHIS is expanding the U.S. avian influenza clean classification to include other breeding flocks, such as ostrich and emu.

APHIS is adding more detailed requirements for NPIP authorized laboratories. The authorized laboratory minimum requirements would include check-test proficiency for Plan diseases, trained technicians, official NPIP laboratory protocol, annual state site visit, APHIS review every three years, reporting criteria and verification.

APHIS is adding a detailed description of the audits of poultry slaughter plants and is changing surveillance sampling at commercial meat-type turkey slaughter plants to allow testing at the flock level rather than at slaughter. Also, it is establishing an H5/H7 AI monitored classification for commercial upland game bird slaughter plants, commercial waterfowl slaughter plants, raised-for-release upland game bird premises and raised-for-release waterfowl premises.

Also new is the requirement to have a designated state contact representative to facilitate communication between the state and APHIS.

NPIP is a cooperative network of federal, state and industry partners that work together to prevent and control certain poultry diseases. NPIP identifies organizations and entities that meet specific disease control standards, providing a mechanism to identify poultry that has tested clean of certain diseases or that has been produced under disease-prevention conditions.

This final rule is scheduled for publication in the April 1 *Federal Register* and will become effective May 1.

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