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Secure egg supply: Another industry's example

Craig Rowles

The secure egg supply plan grew out of a generally recognized need to maintain market continuity of fresh eggs and egg products in the face of an outbreak of a highly pathogenic strain of Avian Influenza (HPAI). Efforts to control the spread of and eradicate HPAI may compete with the egg industry's real-time need to move eggs and associated egg industry products. The Secure Egg Supply (SES) Plan outlines surveillance, biosecurity, and cleaning and disinfection practices for moving different types of eggs and egg industry products within, out of, and into an HPAI Control Area (CA). Continuity of market planning provides the capability to implement science-based risk assessments, risk management requirements, and surveillance requirements to protect food security and animal health before and during a foreign animal disease (FAD) outbreak.[1]

The SES plan was developed as a cooperative effort of several stakeholders, including:[1]

- University of Minnesota Center for Animal Health and Food Safety (CAHFS)
- Iowa State University Center for Food Security and Public Health (CFSPH)
- United Egg Producers (UEP)
- United Egg Association (UEA)
- Egg sector veterinarians and officials
- The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (USDA APHIS VS).

The SES Plan is based on current research and practice in fields including virology, flock husbandry, epidemiology, and risk-assessment. The SES plan uses science- and risk-based preparedness and response components to provide guidance on permitting the movement of egg industry products from a Control Area (CA) during an HPAI outbreak. Simultaneously, these recommendations effectively manage the risk of HPAI transmission to naïve premises. Through the integrated implementation of the components this plan provides a high degree of confidence that egg industry products moved into market channels do not contain HPAI virus.[3]

Egg producers voluntarily participate in the federal and state (FAST) Eggs Plan. Participation reduces the time required to meet the required criteria for moving whole shell eggs into market channels. The plan has four components for an egg premises that chooses to enroll voluntarily prior to an outbreak:[2]

- Audited minimum biosecurity standards.
- Location verification using GPS coordinates of participating farm
- Epidemiology questionnaire and data to identify potential exposure during an outbreak and to document flock production parameters
- Active surveillance program using RRT-PCR.

An SES data portal is also available for use during an HPAI outbreak by State and Federal regulatory officials to collect mortality data, monitor production parameters, record the results of the epidemiologic questionnaire, and record RRT-PCR results from *all* egg farms in a Control Area (with or without prior enrollment in the FAST Eggs Plan). By enrolling prior to an outbreak, premises can get preapproval for their biosecurity practices. The specific biosecurity practices can be audited and premises specific GPS location data collected. Farm personnel can be trained to collect oropharyngeal samples and have an opportunity to complete at least one trial exercise to determine the time required to collect samples on the farm and to travel to a veterinary diagnostic laboratory. Farm managers can have prepositioned resources, including an instructional DVD and written materials describing oropharyngeal sample collection, BHI tubes, sampling swabs, veterinary diagnostic laboratory submission forms, directions to the veterinary diagnostic laboratory, and an SES data portal account where they can enter daily production data.[1]

Many differences exist between the shipment of eggs and egg products versus live animals. However, the SES plan provides a model for a potential similar response system in the swine industry towards an outbreak of FAD.

References

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2. USDA APHIS VS. (2012). *Federal and State Transportation of Eggs.*

3. USDA Veterinary Services. (2012). *Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Secure Egg Supply.* Riverdale, Maryland: USDA.