



NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Randy Olson, Executive Director
515.727.4701 or randy@iowapoultry.com



May 22, 2015

US Ag Secretary, Other Federal and State Leaders Listen Firsthand to Avian Influenza Concerns of Iowa's Egg and Turkey Farmers

Vilsack, Branstad, Northey meet face-to-face with industry representatives to discuss short- and long-term solutions

(URBANDALE, Iowa)—US Agriculture Secretary [Tom Vilsack](#), along with Dr. Kevin Petersburg with the USDA Animal and Poultry Health Inspection Service (APHIS), invited key Iowa leaders—Iowa Governor Terry E. Branstad, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey—to join them in a face-to-face meeting with a diverse group of farmers and related industry leaders severely affected by the avian influenza outbreak. The meeting today at the [Iowa Poultry Association](#) in Urbandale, Iowa demonstrated the depth of concern and joint commitment regarding the avian influenza (AI) outbreak here. Iowa is the state considered hardest hit with an estimated 27 million chickens, turkeys and ducks infected by avian influenza since April. Considered the worst outbreak of avian influenza on record, four states, Wisconsin, Minnesota, [Iowa](#) and Nebraska, have declared states of emergency.

The federal and state leaders met with 15 producers and supply chain organizations related to egg-laying hens, chickens and turkeys, underscoring their determination to find solutions for farmers and impacted communities. The Iowa Poultry Association, [Iowa Egg Council](#) and [Iowa Turkey Federation](#), through their Executive Directors Randy Olson and Gretta Irwin, expressed appreciation for this cohesiveness to swiftly, rigorously and comprehensively address, curtail and recover from the disease in Iowa. Beyond the long-term impact to farmers, another consequence has been hundreds of related layoffs taking place in rural Iowa.

Representatives in the meeting explained to the federal and state officials the scope of their losses, the ripple effect it will have on the US economy, and how certain markets could be lost permanently.

JT Dean of Center Fresh Group of Iowa calculated that the producers in today's meeting represented "two eggs of every dozen nationwide," a significant sign of this outbreak's impact and "showing the need to become more aggressive in quarantine zones to stamp out this disease."

"This issue is overwhelming in many respects so we are grateful for the bi-partisan leadership of our state and federal officials," says Randy Olson, executive director of the Iowa Poultry Association. "We conveyed our need for adequate on-the-ground support and financial aid to manage and overcome this. We need them to find the source of this virus that has spread despite strict and heightened biosecurity measures. We need collaboration to sanitize infected farms, stop AI's spread, and help these farmers recover."

-more-

Bob Riley of Feed Energy Group says there is a major ripple effect throughout the industry. “Thirty to 40 percent of feed business will be lost, which will potentially result in many jobs lost not only in our industry but clear through to the retail level.”

“We are reassured with this personal attention to Iowa’s critical needs by Secretary Vilsack, Governor Branstad and Iowa Ag Secretary Northey that we can arrive at a much more satisfactory plan for re-population for our farmers and bringing processing plants back to full capacity.” says Gretta Irwin, executive director of the Iowa Turkey Federation.

Iowa is the leading egg producer in the U.S. providing about one in five eggs sold nationwide. Iowa’s turkey industry includes 130 turkey farms which raise 11 million turkeys annually. Iowa ranks ninth in US turkey production.

#