

Biosecurity Remains an Essential Part in Keeping Backyard Flocks Healthy

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These days, a growing number of people are supplementing their food budgets by producing some of their food at home. While fruit trees, backyard gardens, and container gardens are always a favorite that provide fresh fruit and vegetables, small, backyard poultry flocks that were common many years ago have come back into the “norm” and are providing fresh eggs to the family meal time.

If you are part of the ongoing trend and have a small, backyard poultry flock, there are precautions you should be aware of in order to maintain both the flock health, as well as your and your neighbors’ health.

Following is a news release from the TAHC (Texas Animal Health Commission) regarding how to maintain a healthy, backyard flock:

July 26, 2016

AUSTIN, TX - An ongoing Salmonella outbreak has sickened at least 611 people in 45 states, including Texas, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The outbreak has been linked to live poultry in backyard flocks.

Texas is home to one of the largest backyard chicken flock populations in the U.S. To minimize the spread of Salmonella, the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) always emphasizes the use of proper biosecurity. Biosecurity is a set of preventive measures designed to reduce the risk of introduction and transmission of an infectious disease agent, such as Salmonella.

Even when they appear healthy and clean, live poultry may have Salmonella bacteria in their droppings and on their feathers, feet and beaks. The bacteria can also contaminate cages, coops, chick/poult boxes, bedding, plants and soil in the area where the birds live and roam.

Additionally, Salmonella bacteria can be found on the clothes, shoes and hands of anyone who handled the animals or played and worked near them. It is essential to wash your hands frequently when handling birds in order to limit your risk of exposure.

By following these simple guidelines you can help minimize the risk:

- **Keep Your Distance** - Restrict access to your property and your poultry, and post a sign.
- **Keep It Clean** - Wear clean clothes, scrub your shoes/boots with disinfectant, and wash hands thoroughly.
- **Don't Haul Disease Home** - If you have shown birds at a fair or exhibition or are bringing in new animals, keep them separated from the rest of your flock for 30 days after the event.
- **Don't Borrow Disease From Your Neighbor** - Do not share equipment, tools, or other supplies with your neighbors or other livestock or poultry owners.
- **Look For Signs of Infectious Diseases** - You should know what diseases are of concern to your flock and be on the lookout for unusual signs or behavior, severe illness and/or sudden deaths.
- **Report Sick Animals** - Don't wait. Report serious or unusual animal health problems to your veterinarian, State or Federal animal health officials or local Extension office.

For more information, visit www.tahc.texas.gov or call 1-800-550-8242 or contact your local TAHC region office. The TAHC has also created a video regarding biosecurity and keeping your backyard flock healthy. Follow the link for more information: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-MHjVdt6Uc>.