

## **Ds Notes**

**04/11/22**

### **Protect your Flocks from Avian Influenza**

A potentially harmful virus called avian influenza has been detected in many states this spring, including Kansas and surrounding states. The virus has been confirmed in wild birds in Kansas, and at least one small poultry flock. The virus has been isolated in waterfowl, wild birds, small farms, and commercial operations. Data indicates that the virus is probably moving with the aid of the spring migration of waterfowl as the weather begins to warm. To protect your birds, now is the time to keep as much distance as possible from migrating ducks and geese.

This current outbreak is in a form that is more concerning than many. It is being referred to as highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). This term means it is highly contagious and can infect chickens, turkeys, gamebirds, and other birds and can cause severe illness and/or sudden death.

As widespread as it now is across the nation, poultry owners should assume the virus is likely present all around and begin an immediate biosecurity program. Backyard flocks are susceptible to this virus as well. There is no licensed and approved vaccine for use against avian influenzas in poultry in the US. The best way to protect your birds is to practice good biosecurity.

Monitor your birds for symptoms including sneezing or wheezing, coughing, nasal discharge, facial swellings, and other signs of respiratory struggle, like gasping for air. Look for a lack of energy, movement, and reduced appetite. Infected layers may suddenly lay fewer eggs that are misshapen. The birds may appear to have incoordination and diarrhea. Be on the lookout for sudden death in birds even if they aren't showing other symptoms.

If you are able, while birds are migrating through, keep your flock indoors or undercover. The biggest risk to a small farm is waterfowl and wild birds that stop by to steal feed or water and mix with your birds while feeding. You must keep waterfowl far from your birds. The virus can also spread from passing waterfowl to local birds that do not migrate.

If you have a pond that is attracting the migrating birds, then stay away, and keep your pets away as well. Expect the pressure to seek water from your property to be stronger in the Midwest and West this year as moisture levels have been low.

Eliminate roosting birds like starlings and pigeons if you have them. Now is the time to stop attracting wild birds with feeders. There is data that suggests that the well-intended feeding of wild birds could lead to a concentration of birds that allows rapid spread of diseases during an outbreak. Wild birds are starting to build spring nests, and these should be removed from coops and barns. Wear gloves and a mask to reduce your exposure to mites and other diseases these nests may harbor. Never place a bird house near your poultry. Light anti-bird netting can be used to keep the birds from building nests, and nets over pens can keep wild birds from entering your coop.

Many small flocks leave feeders full of grain all day and night in the coop. This is never a good idea because many rodents and small mammals visit at night to steal a meal and spread droppings that may contain diseases. A good way to feed birds is to determine how much they will clean up during the day, and feed only this amount every morning. By roosting time, the feeders should be empty. It is even better to pull up the feeder and store it in a rodent proof tub overnight.

Good biosecurity includes other important prevention strategies. You can make an emergency footbath by using a half cup of bleach in a gallon of water, then placing this in a shallow container to step in when entering your bird coop. Don't visit other flocks. Auctions, shows and swaps will be at risk during this time. Purchase chicks from only a tested source. Though most mail order hatcheries are monitored, there is still a small risk of infection. Stop purchase of hatching eggs and chicks from small internet sellers of stock that are not monitored. Some offers will say that their birds are tested, but this likely refers to *Salmonella pullorum* because most small flocks are not required to be tested for avian influenzas like commercial poultry.

Gamebird operations should be alert as well. Netted flight pens are subject to pressure from wild birds and waterfowl the same as small poultry farms. Commercial gamebird farms should not be located near water sources where waterfowl stop. Any method of keeping the waterfowl away from the flight pens should be implemented immediately. If an ATV is used on the farm, it should be decontaminated by washing and applying disinfectant before getting it close to the pens. It is still early spring, so most pheasant operations have not released started chicks to the flight pens. If you are able, try to hold the chicks back in the brooder house as long as possible to give yourself more time for the migrating birds to clear.

Now is the time to be neighbor friendly and stay away from other poultry farms. Commercial poultry farms are highly invested in poultry production so being a good neighbor by staying off their premises during this time is helpful. Many producers enjoy giving educational tours of their farm, but all tours should stop until this threat subsides. Most commercial farms never welcome visitors because this is part of their biosecurity programs. Even the best prevention plan will not prevent all cases of avian influenza. The Kansas Department of Agriculture is a good source of current testing results and contacts for potential problems. If your birds have symptoms of HPAI, contact your veterinarian or call KDA toll-free at 833-765-2006, or contact them via email at [KDA.HPAI@ks.gov](mailto:KDA.HPAI@ks.gov).

### **Video of the Week: Planting a Garden**

<https://kansashealthyards.org/all-videos/video/planting-a-garden>

### **K-State Garden Hour - Pollinator Plants for Continuous Food Sources**

Include plants for pollinators in your spring planting plan! Providing season-long pollen and nectar sources in the garden is critical for our pollinators to forage on, and an important way to help increase local pollinator numbers. Join Jason Graves, Central Kansas District Horticulture Extension Agent, to learn about the planting strategies and pollinator garden plants that will help you supply pollinators with the critical foraging

habitat they need. To register, see upcoming webinars, and view previous webinars, visit: <http://ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour>

## **REMINDERS**

1. Remove dead canes from raspberries and blackberries.
2. This is a good time to plant cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower transplants as well as lettuce, kale, beets, carrots and Swiss chard if you haven't done so yet.

## **Henbit and Chickweed in Lawns**

The plant with the little purple flowers that have been showing up in home lawns is called henbit. If you are not sure this is what you have, check the stems. If they are square rather than round, you have henbit. A plant that also is low growing but has round stems and tiny white flowers is chickweed.

Both these plants are winter annuals and start to grow in the fall. They spend the winter as small plants and so most people do not pay much attention to them until they start to flower in the spring. Trying to kill either one at this late stage with a herbicide usually is a waste of time and money. Though plants may be burned back, they will rarely be killed. So what should you do? Remember, these are winter annuals that will die as soon as the weather turns hot. Keep the lawn mowed until nature takes its course.

However, you can do something next fall that will help the following spring. Henbit and chickweed usually germinate about mid-October. Spraying with 2,4-D, Weed-B-Gon, Weed Free Zone, Weed Out, or Trimec in late October to early November can go a long way toward eliminating these plants as they are small and relatively easy to control. Choose a day that is at least 50 degrees F. These herbicides will work at temperatures below 50 degrees but the weeds are killed at a slower rate. You may also use a preemergent herbicide for lawns in late September as long as have not recently put down grass seed. Spraying with the postemergence herbicides mentioned earlier will also catch dandelions which the preemergent herbicides will miss.

Spot treating may be needed in the spring (March) whichever method of control you use but is more likely with the use of preemergent herbicides. Use Weed Free Zone, Speed Zone, Weed Out, Weed-B-Gon, Trimec, or one of the special henbit herbicides early in the spring before they have put on much growth. (Ward Upham)

## **Fertilizing the Home Orchard**

Fruit trees benefit from fertilization around the bloom period, but the amount needed varies with the age of the tree. Normally, trees primarily need nitrogen, so the recommendations are for a high nitrogen fertilizer such as a 27-3-3, 29-5-4, 30-3-3 or something similar. Though recommended for lawns, these fertilizers will also work well as long as they do not contain weed killers or crabgrass preventers. Use the following rates:

- Trees 1 to 2 years old, apply one-fourth cup of fertilizer per tree;
- Trees 3 to 4 years old, apply one-half cup per tree;
- Trees 5 to 10 years old, apply 1 to 2 cups per tree;

Trees more than 10 years old, apply 2 to 3 cups.

You may also use nitrate of soda (16-0-0) but double the rate recommended above. If a soil test calls for phosphorus and potassium, use a 10-10-10 but triple the rate.

On apple trees, last year's growth should be 8 to 10 inches, cherries should have 10 to 12 inches, and peaches should equal 12 to 15 inches of terminal growth. If less than this, apply the higher rate of fertilizer, and if more, apply the lesser amount.

Spread all fertilizer evenly on the ground away from the trunk of the tree and to the outer spread of the branches. Water in the fertilizer with at least 1/4 inch of water if rain does not do the job for you. (Ward Upham)

### **Blanching Cauliflower**

Gardeners that haven't grown cauliflower before are often surprised that the heads of most varieties are a yellowish color and not the white they expect. The yellowish hue is a reaction to sunlight. In order to have the heads remain white, the developing heads must be covered to protect them from the sun. This is commonly done by pulling several of the outer leaves over the head when the head is the size of a silver dollar. Hold the leaves in place with a rubber band, tape, clothes pin or soft twine. Plants need to be checked every few days to make sure the curds of the expanding head don't begin to show. There are some varieties that are self-blanching but watch them to make sure the leaves actually do cover the head. Self-blanching varieties are more likely to "work" in cool weather. (Ward Upham)

### **Controlling Grassy Weeds in Broadleaf Plants**

Most gardeners are familiar with herbicides that can be used to eliminate broadleaves from grasses (i.e. dandelions from lawns). However, gardeners may not be as familiar with herbicides that can take grasses out of broadleaf plants like shrubs. There are two major weed killer types labeled for homeowners that are used to kill grassy weeds in broadleaf plants. On the commercial side, the trade names for these products are Fusilade and Poast. Homeowner labeling is more diverse. I have seen Fusilade sold under the names of Ortho "Grass-B-Gon". Poast is sometimes sold to homeowners under the Poast label but I've seen it more commonly sold as "Bonide Grass Beater", "Fertilome Over the Top II Grass Killer", "Hi-Yield Grass Killer" and "Monterey Grass Getter." There may be other trade names, too. Fortunately, you can identify the product by the common chemical name listed on the label. Fusilade's common chemical name is fluazifop, and Poast's is sethoxydim.

If you decide to use one of these products, read the label carefully. Often, a crop oil must be added to the spray solution for the herbicide to work well. Some grassy weeds are not controlled such as brome grass and sandbur. Mature tall fescue also is not controlled though seedling tall fescue is. Established bermudagrass is knocked back but rarely killed.

Though both these products can be used over the top of numerous broadleaf plants (including iris), there are some differences in labeling. For example, if you need to control grasses in vegetables, choose Poast as Fusilade is not labeled for vegetables. However,

Poast products cannot be used on all vegetables and the waiting period between spraying and harvest may be so long as to make use impractical. To see a label for one of the products that contain sethoxydim, see Hi-Yield Grass Killer. (Ward Upham)

### **There Never Used to be Fruit on Ornamental Pears**

The fruit on ornamental pears is quite small; about the size of a marble. However, it can be very messy if it lands on sidewalks or driveways and people squish the fruit when walking or driving. You may have noticed that ornamental pears are producing fruit much more commonly than they have in the past. Why is this so? A little history is needed in order to understand what has happened.

Ornamental pears used to be called Bradford pears. This was a bit of a misnomer as 'Bradford' was a specific variety. Ornamental pears were called Bradfords because this was practically the only variety that people planted. Therefore, if you bought an ornamental pear a number of years ago, it was likely a Bradford. All was well and good until people noticed that Bradfords would fall apart after a number of years due to a weak branching structure. Therefore, nurseries started selling "improved" ornamental pears that were not Bradfords such as 'Aristocrat', 'Capital', 'Redspire', 'Chanticleer' and various other varieties. It was felt that all of these varieties had a stronger branching pattern than 'Bradford' but such may not be the case. Both 'Chanticleer' and 'Redspire' have shown branch breakage. 'Aristocrat' does appear to have better branch angles but more time is needed to make a firm recommendation.

Here is the key. Pears usually require cross-pollination in order to fruit. In other words, you must have two different varieties of pear before fruit forms. When all we had were Bradfords, we had no fruit due to a lack of cross-pollination. Now that we have such a mixture of varieties, we will get fruit as long as two different varieties of ornamental pears bloom at the same time and are close enough that bees can work between them.

This formation of fruit can also lead to a second problem. Volunteer trees can come up from the seed contained in the fruit. Therefore, you may see ornamental pears come up in areas where no one planted them. This has become enough of a problem that several states have added ornamental pears to their invasive plant list.

There are products that are sold as fruit preventers such as Florel but timing and air temperature are critical and our results have been mixed. (Ward Upham)

### **Planting Easter Lilies Outside**

Gardeners often hate to throw out Easter Lilies after they finish blooming and may wonder if they can grow outside. Though not reliably hardy in Kansas, many gardeners have success if they follow a few simple rules.

1. After the flowers have faded, remove the flower stalk so that energy does not go into making seed.
2. Keep the plant inside until the danger of frost is past. Keep soil moist but never waterlogged. Don't allow water to sit in the tray. Continue to fertilize.

3. The pot can be moved outside when frost is no longer a concern. Sinking the pot into the soil up to the brim and placing in dappled shade will help reduce watering. Continue to water and fertilize until the top growth dies down.

4. Choose a sunny, well-drained spot for planting. Good drainage is vital for lilies and so the addition of organic matter is usually necessary for most soils. Till or dig the soil 6 inches deep and add 3 inches of peat moss. Mix the soil and peat moss together. This will form a berm that should drain very well.

5. Plant the bulbs 6 inches deep and 12 to 18 inches apart and water in well. Mulch to conserve moisture. New growth may appear later in the summer or the plant may stay dormant until the following spring.

6. Cover the plants in the fall after the foliage has died down with straw, pine needles, wood chips or other types of mulch to help protect the plant over winter. Use 4 inches of straw or 3 inches of any of the other materials.

7. Uncover the plants in the spring to allow new growth to appear and fertilize according to soil test. (Ward Upham)