

newsworthy trends

As Interest In Backyard Poultry Grows, So Does Need For Healthy Birds

(NAPSA)—Raising “backyard poultry” has become increasingly popular all over the U.S. these days. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reminds both new and experienced poultry owners it’s important to keep your birds healthy by practicing backyard biosecurity.

While “biosecurity” may not be a common household word, for poultry and bird owners it can spell the difference between health and disease. Practicing biosecurity can help keep disease away from farms and backyard pens and keep birds healthy. By using biosecurity practices, poultry owners can help reduce the chances of their birds being exposed to infectious poultry diseases such as avian influenza.

According to Dr. Fidelis Hegngi, senior staff veterinarian with USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, backyard biosecurity means doing everything needed to protect birds from disease—similar to what people do every day to protect themselves from human infections—essentially good hygiene.

“That’s what protects us from germs—we wash our hands, avoid contact with people who have colds and flu, and we cover our mouths and noses when we sneeze,” says Dr. Hegngi. “If you follow basic hygiene activities with your birds, you’ll go a long way to keeping your birds safe from disease.”

By taking a few simple steps, you can protect your birds. Dr. Hegngi recommends bird owners wash their hands thoroughly with soap, water and disinfectant before and after handling birds. When you’re through working with your birds, disinfect your



shoes and equipment. Cages, food and water should be cleaned daily. Poultry owners should remove feed from bags; place it in clean, sealed containers; and throw the bags away. Finally, bird owners should not borrow or share bird supplies. If they must, items should be cleaned and disinfected before being brought home.

Be sure to isolate new birds you bring in from your other birds for at least 30 days. You should restrict access to your birds, especially from people who own birds that are housed outside. Keep your birds away from other birds whenever possible.

Look your flock over regularly so you can watch for signs of illness or unexpected deaths among your birds. Report sick birds or die-offs to the local cooperative extension office, a veterinarian, State Veterinarian, State animal diagnostic laboratory or USDA Veterinary Services toll free at (866) 536-7593.

For additional recommendations, poultry owners are encouraged to visit the USDA’s Web site at <http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov>.