

Avian flu outreach efforts ramp up for fall season

Migratory waterfowl potentially carrying a highly pathogenic bird flu virus are about to begin the annual trek south over Oregon and other states in the Pacific Flyway.

That means it's time for the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to step up its outreach and education efforts to backyard bird owners whose flocks might come in contact with wild waterfowl over the fall and winter.

The messages haven't changed much from earlier this year when ODA and its partners embarked on outreach following two separate detections of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in backyard birds in Douglas and Deschutes counties, but those messages bear repeating.

"Getting the word out about practicing good biosecurity is important 12 months a year, but fall and winter are especially critical because migration of waterfowl is taking place," says ODA Avian Health Coordinator Madeline Benoit. "The cold and wet weather ahead of us actually helps the virus to sur-

vive better and with a lot of people hiking or hunting in the fall, they could unknowingly track the virus home on their shoes and spread it to any backyard birds they might have."

Outreach efforts ramped up following last December's detection of HPAI in a flock of backyard birds in Douglas County. That kicked off implementation of Oregon's multi-agency response plan to bird flu which includes enhanced surveillance along with increased outreach and education, especially to backyard bird owners.

A second detection of HPAI in a Deschutes County backyard flock in February provided additional impetus to reach bird owners throughout the state.

While commercial poultry operations need to be prepared for dealing with HPAI, messaging about good biosecurity has focused on backyard bird owners.

No commercial poultry in Oregon was affected by the outbreaks inside the state's border, even though commercial operators in other states were greatly impacted by HPAI out-

breaks in the Midwest this year.

"Since the two Oregon outbreaks, we've reached out to at least 8,000 people through bird shows, poultry swaps, and other events that attract backyard flock owners," says Benoit.

The presence of ODA and U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) at these venues has helped deliver targeted messages about improving biosecurity among backyard flocks.

Outreach efforts extended to in-person presentations at 4-H events and county fairs this summer, even as fair managers, as a precaution, decided against allowing waterfowl on site.

ODA and its partners will seek out other events and venues this fall and winter. For some backyard bird owners, it will be news they have not yet heard.

For others, the information will be a reinforcement of what they've heard before. If bird owners have let their guard down since February, it's time to get re-engaged.

"We will be saying a lot of the same things and hitting on the points about increased biosecurity," says Benoit. "A key message for backyard bird owners is that they need to be more aware now, and think of how they can better protect their birds."

Some of the educational tools being employed were developed well before HPAI arrived to the Pacific Northwest. Others have since been developed. Infographics, pamphlets, posters, stickers, and info-magnets have been created and distributed to locations that come in contact with bird owners, including animal feed stores.

Packets of information have been sent to 4-H groups and others. A backyard bird biosecurity video features tips and general practices that empower people to protect their birds from avian influenza.

A new video is in the works that focuses on educating hunters, falconers, birdwatchers, and other recreationists that might come into contact with wild waterfowl this fall and

winter seasons.

In general, HPAI messaging to backyard bird owners falls into three categories — a focus on birds, a focus on the environment, and a focus on transportation and equipment. One important tip applies to birds in all situations, HPAI notwithstanding.

"Check your birds for signs and symptoms of disease," says Benoit. "Know what healthy birds look like. Keep their water and feeders clean, along with equipment that may come in contact with them. Quarantine new birds that you purchase for 30 days when they come into your flock. Buy birds from reputable sources."

Focusing on the environment is a bit more challenging since migratory waterfowl are seemingly everywhere in the fall. Benoit asks that bird owners be aware of introducing the virus on such things as bike and truck tires, equipment, and supplies.

"The most crucial thing over the next several months is to keep your backyard birds away from wild waterfowl," says Benoit, noting that the flock

infected last year in Douglas County had access to a pond that was frequented by migratory birds. "Don't let them commingle, don't let your birds free range with wild waterfowl. Don't entice the waterfowl to come into your yard. For instance, don't feed the wild ducks if they are on your property."

In addition to practicing good biosecurity, backyard bird owners should monitor their flock closely and report sick or dead birds to ODA at 1-800-347-7028. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife continues asking people to report wild bird deaths by calling 1-866-968-2600.

People should avoid contact with sick or dead wild and domestic birds.

The need for outreach and education will continue in the months ahead, as it is unlikely that HPAI will disappear any time soon.

"This could be a way of life for the next several years," says Benoit."

For more information, visit www.bit.do/ORbirdflu.

Anglers prepare for opening of coastal wild salmon season Tuesday

SALEM — Wild coho seasons on many coastal rivers and bays will open beginning Tuesday, Sept. 15. This year rivers in 11 basins on Oregon's coast will be open for wild coho harvest including Tillamook Bay, Nestucca Bay, Siletz, Yaquina, Alsea, Beaver Creek, Siuslaw, Umpqua, Coos, Coquille and Floras Creek/New River.

In addition, Tenmile,

Siltcoos and Tahkenitch lakes will have wild coho seasons.

Fishery managers are predicting there will be 206,600 adult wild coho in the ocean this summer, most of which will return to Oregon's coastal rivers and streams. This is slightly below last year's predicted return, and significantly lower than the 2014 actual return of 359,624 fish.

"Unlike recent years, this

year's projections are not as consistent up and down the coast, resulting in shorter seasons on some rivers, while others are very similar to last year," said Mike Gray, ODFW fish biologist in Charleston.

On the North Coast, there will be shortened seasons in the Tillamook and Nestucca basins and, due to poorer forecasted status, the Nehalem will not open for wild coho at all

(though it remains open for hatchery coho).

"Our North Coast seasons are more conservative this year than 2013-2014, but we still have opportunity for harvest," said Chris Knutsen, ODFW fish biologist in Tillamook.

Seasons on the Alsea and Siuslaw also will be shortened compared to 2014, while the Umpqua will join many other basins that have been moved

away from specific harvest quotas. Instead biologists are implementing a fixed season length.

River-specific seasons, quotas, bag limits and closed areas can be found on the ODFW website at www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/coastal_salmon_seasons.asp.

While 2015 is the seventh year in a row that Oregon's coastal rivers will open to the

harvest of wild coho, fishery managers are sounding a cautionary note for the near future.

"We're coming off some very robust years for wild coho, but based on what we're seeing with ocean conditions, anglers should begin preparing for smaller wild coho returns and reduced harvest opportunities in upcoming years," according to Chris Kern, ODFW fish division deputy administrator.

Viks from 1B

he said. "We're excited. They can run. But even more than that they fit in right away."

"They're great kids, from a great family, and those are the kind of kids you can build on."

He also saw positive signs from his freshman twins, Kaeli and Trinity Ramos.

"I've told them both how good they are, and how much they can help us, and how much we need them," Johnson said. "We need them to grow up fast. That's a lot (to expect from) a freshman who has not been in a varsity program before, and to come in here with high expectations."

"But that's how it's got to be, and they're going to get better."

Today's races at Ash Creek include a 5,000-meter varsity boys race at noon and a 5,000-meter varsity girls race is at 12:30 p.m. Earlier races, each at 3,000 meters, are boys junior varsity at 10 a.m., girls junior varsity at 10:30 a.m., boys novice at 11 a.m. and girls novice at 11:30 a.m.

Nearly three dozen schools are entered, including two of the Vikings' Far West League rivals, Marshfield and North Bend.

The top 10 individual finishers will get T-shirts, while there's an extra incentive for the winning team: Berry pie.

"We can't get better if we don't go every day to practice and work hard," Johnson said. "I've said a that a thousand times. But it's on them. It's not always easy, but it's simple."

Tugman Invitational results:

- Girls (5,000 meters)*
1. Sailor Hutton, Bandon, 18:56.
 2. Celie Mans, Siuslaw, 19:41.
 3. Gabby Hobson, North Bend, 20:27.
 4. Jazmin Chavez, Marshfield, 20:37.
 5. Kaitlin Armstrong, Gold Beach, 20:37.
 6. Aida Santoro, Bandon, 21:14.
 7. Megan Rutherford, North Bend, 21:17.
 8. Camerin Feagins, Sutherlin, 21:18.
 9. Sarah Cutler, Bandon, 21:20.
 10. Morgan Bingham, Siuslaw,

- 21:21.
- Other Siuslaw:* 14. Kaeli Ramos 21:51. 17. Mikaela Siegel 22:02. 20. Sierra Potter 22:13. 25. Trinity Ramos 22:13. 30. Lainey Goss 23:56.
40. Kaylee Graham 24:44.
- Team scoring:* Siuslaw 52, North Bend 53, Bandon 71, South Umpqua 85, Marshfield 104, Oakland 164.
- Boys (5,000 meters)*
1. Michael Brown, North Bend, 16:40.
2. Sawyer Heckard, Marshfield, 16:41.
3. Hunter Hutton, Bandon, 16:51.
4. Josh Snyder, Bandon, 17:06.
5. Chris Burton, Brookings-Harbor, 17:26.
6. George LaGesse, North Bend, 17:27.

7. Ian Emler, Marshfield, 17:47.
8. Jimmie Allen, Brookings-Harbor, 17:58.
9. Murray Bingham, Siuslaw, 18:11.
10. AJ Nichols, Oakland, 18:13.
- Other Siuslaw:* 11. Isaac Griffes 18:19. 13. Kyle King 18:31. 27. Sean Burns 19:18.
28. Tyler Williams 19:19. 33. Jordan Northrop 19:31.
66. Robert Mans 22:42.
- Team scoring:* Bandon 58, North Bend 64, Brookings-Harbor 81, Siuslaw 88, Marshfield 115.
- Stan Pusieski is a Siuslaw sports fan in the Florence community. Find him at www.ExplodingWhaleSports.com.*

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