

# Bird flu strikes second Calif. poultry farm

## Virus surfaces farther south than before

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

A second California commercial poultry farm has been stricken with highly pathogenic bird flu. It's the farthest south the virus has surfaced yet.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture confirmed the Eurasian H5N8 virus in a 114,000-bird chicken farm in Kings County in the San Joaquin Valley. The agency added the farm Feb. 13 to a list of bird flu outbreaks in U.S. commercial and non-commercial flocks since mid-December.

No further information, in-

cluding the name of the farm, was available Monday from the USDA.

The USDA reported to the World Organization for Animal Health that the outbreak began Feb. 2 with an increased mortality among chickens.

The virus was confirmed Feb. 12, and the premises were quarantined. The flock included ducks, according to a report posted by the Organization for Animal Health.

Canadian authorities reacted Feb. 13 by banning poultry raised, processed or shipped from California. Hong Kong banned poultry from Kings

County. China and South Korea have enacted bans on U.S. poultry in response to previous cases.

Bird flu has infected wild birds, non-commercial flocks and a game bird farm in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, California and Nevada since mid-December.

The only previous commercial poultry flock infected in the U.S. was a 145,000-turkey Foster Farms operation in Stanislaus County. The virus was confirmed there Jan. 23.

Stanislaus County's county seat, Modesto, is 126 miles north of Hanford, the county seat of Kings County.

Highly pathogenic Eurasian bird flu was first confirmed in North America Dec.

1 at a British Columbia, Canada, commercial poultry farm. The virus spread to 10 other B.C. commercial chicken and turkey operations by Dec. 17.

The virus appeared in the United States in a northern pintail duck found dead at Wiser Lake in Whatcom County in northwest Washington. Another disease killed the migrating duck.

Migratory waterfowl carry the virus, but are immune to its ill effects. The virus is lethal to poultry and a variety of native birds.

The USDA recently added a great horned owl and bald eagle to the list of wild birds infected by avian flu. Both birds were in Canyon County, Idaho.



Courtesy of Alice Welch, USDA  
U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service inspectors examine chickens at the Holmes poultry slaughterhouse in Nixon, Texas, in this file photo.

# Poultry inspection ruling appealed

## Plaintiffs oppose new inspection system

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

A consumer advocacy group will appeal a federal judge's decision to throw out its lawsuit against USDA's new poultry slaughter inspection system.

U.S. District Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson in Washington, D.C., recently found that Food & Water Watch did not demonstrate its members would be harmed by the regulatory change.

Last year, USDA enacted new rules that reduced the number of inspectors monitoring poultry carcasses for adulteration, instead allowing slaughterhouse employees to perform those duties.

The agency said the traditional focus on visually detectable diseases during post-processing inspection was outdated and it made more sense to devote personnel to preventing microbial contamination of poultry.

Food & Water Watch sought a preliminary injunction blocking implementation of the rules, arguing the new system violates the Poultry Products Inspection Act, which governs processing and labeling.

The judge recently rejected that request and dismissed the lawsuit because Food & Water Watch and individual members who opposed the rule change lacked the legal standing to challenge it in federal court.

To proceed with their lawsuit, the plaintiffs would have

to suffer an injury from the agency's action, but Food & Water Watch failed to show the rules will significantly increase the risk of disease for its members, Jackson said.

As evidence of the new system's hazards, the group provided statements by current and former meat inspectors who claimed the rules will allow more adulterated meat to enter commerce.

However, Jackson said these assertions are "unsupported and overblown" because they're based on anecdotes that USDA rebutted with data from pilot projects.

The judge also discounted the group's arguments that processing plants involved in the pilot projects had higher rates of pathogens — salmonella and campylobacter — in some years and scenarios.

"This narrow focus on certain agency findings is an exceedingly myopic view" of the USDA's data and overlooks the "larger and far more significant conclusion" that the agency expects an "overall reduction in foodborne illness under the new poultry inspection system," she said.

Jackson also rejected Food & Water Watch's legal standing on the basis that plaintiffs were misinformed by the USDA's "inspection legend" on carcasses that were not actually approved by federal inspectors, among other arguments.

Food & Water Watch alleges USDA's new inspection scheme allows the poultry industry to police itself and the group has filed a notice of intent to challenge the recent ruling before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.

# Carlton Complex bill gaining support in Olympia

## Legislation allows swifter action as wildfires spread

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Legislation rising from the ashes of the state's largest wildland fire ever has been tamped down enough to win more political support.

House Bill 2093 combines a handful of policies originally proposed in several bills introduced by northeast Washington Reps. Joel Kretz and Shelly Short.

The policies include authorizing landowners to go onto public and private lands without permission to nip a wildland fire.

"You can go and fight the fire. That's the key," House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Brian Blake said.

HB 2093 also would require Public Lands Commissioner Peter Goldmark to appoint a liaison to represent landowners during a wildland fire. The liaison also would



Dan Wheat/Capital Press  
Old Highway 97, just north of Malott, Wash., still shows, Oct. 16, that it was a fire break on the eastern edge of the Carlton Complex Fire last summer. Hills in the background were burned.

oversee a new advisory committee, on which counties, fire agencies, environmental groups, and timberland and rangeland owners would be represented.

The bill does not include an earlier proposal to divert taxes from the state Department of Natural Resources to fund county-level wildland firefighting divisions.

The bill also does not in-

clude a proposal to let counties assume command if DNR can't marshal the resources for a speedy response.

Also, landowners would be limited in how they could fight fires on somebody else's land without permission. Backfires, for example, would be prohibited.

At a hearing Tuesday, Kretz, R-Wauconda, said he was satisfied with HB 2093.

"I think we've got a pretty good product. I think we'll enter the next fire season with more tools," he said.

Okanogan County residents told the committee earlier this month that landowners missed an opportunity to contain the Carlton Complex fires as they waited in vain for permission from DNR to go onto state lands.

The lightning-sparked blazes eventually burned 256,108 acres in north-central Washington between July 14 and Aug. 25, destroying 300 homes and killing 1,000 cattle. One man died of a heart attack defending his home.

The DNR and the Washington Public Employees Association, which represents DNR firefighters, dropped their opposition to earlier bills and have indicated support for HB 2093.

Blake, an Aberdeen Democrat, said he's confident the bill will pass the House.

The legislation likely will be amended before it leaves Blake's committee. As it stands, the bill, which was worked on by DNR, would bar someone from falling timber or bulldozing a fire line without permission. Landowners would be limited to using hand tools and hoses, opening gates and moving burning vegetation away from buildings.

That's too restrictive, Blake said. "When we spotted the language, we said, 'Wait a minute.'"

# Two-day Blueberry School to help growers

By MITCH LIES  
For the Capital Press

In 2003, after participating in a day-long blueberry conference where presenters reported on research results, Oregon State University Extension Berry Crops Specialist Bernadine Strik and other small fruits researchers couldn't shake the feeling that something was missing.

"Considering that blueberry acreage doubled from 1990 to 2004, we felt there was a big need for a school that would address everything from site selection to markets, cultivars and how to develop and maintain good plantings," Strik said.

Behind Strik's leadership, a year later, the researchers



Courtesy of Oregon State University

launched the first OSU Blueberry School.

"It was a great success," Strik said. Three years later, after Oregon acreage increased another 43 percent, the researchers put on a second blueberry school.

It, too, went over well, Strik said, and now, with harvested acreage up 83 percent since 2007, the researchers are back with a third school, scheduled for March 16 and 17 on the OSU campus.

Strik described the school's main emphasis as an attempt "to help growers produce high-quality fruit with high yields while minimizing input costs as much as possible, and to help ensure that those who are getting in the business make the correct decisions."

The school has morphed

over the years to keep up with changes in the industry. This year, for example, instead of one presentation on organic blueberry production, information on organic production methods will be interspersed throughout the presentations.

Strik made the change both because acres in organic blueberry production have increased substantially since 2007, and because conventional growers often utilize organic production methods.

The school also will provide new information on use of organic amendments, Strik said, and new information on nutrient management in organic and conventional production systems, a presentation that will include information on leaf-tissue standards for various cultivars.

Also, she said, blueberry industry consultants will provide market information. And new this year, the school will include a section on blueberry plant physiology.

"This has gone over well in test runs," Strik said. "It helps growers understand the why and not just the how."

Strik described the workload involved in putting on the school as "tremendous. Not just from me," she said, "but from all the speakers involved."

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The Oregon Beef Council is soliciting proposals for projects in the following areas:

- 1) Positive Producer Image
- 2) Education Legislation
- 3) Education related to beef
- 4) Generic promotion of beef

Any individual or organization may propose projects in any of the categories listed above.

Projects must meet the Beef Council's mission of enhancing the beef industry's image of profitability of Oregon's beef industry. Approved projects must comply with the Beef Promotion and Research Act and O.R.S. 577

To present a proposal you must complete and submit an Authorization Request Form by March 20, 2015 at 4:00 p.m.

Download an Authorization Request Form from orbeef.org or by contacting the Oregon Beef Council office (503) 274-2333 or via e-mail at julie@orbeef.org.

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