

# Walker declares state of emergency over bird flu in counties

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MADISON (AP) — Gov. Scott Walker has declared a state of emergency following an outbreak of the deadly bird flu in Wisconsin.

Walker on Monday authorized the Wisconsin National Guard to assist authorities responding to the bird flu in Jefferson, Juneau and Barron counties. That includes helping with the response and clean up once the infected birds are killed.

Walker says the state must act “quickly and efficiently to contain the outbreak and protect domestic poultry.”

State agriculture officials this month detected the virus for the first time in Wisconsin. It has been found in three flocks affecting tens of thousands of chickens and turkeys.

Authorities stress there was no risk to public health and no danger to the food supply from the highly pathogenic H5N2 strain.

Federal authorities have confirmed another infection in Minnesota of a deadly bird flu strain.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture said Monday the latest farm hit by the H5N2 virus had 23,000 turkeys in Kandiyohi (kan-dee-YOH'-high) County of west-central Minnesota. It's the sixth detection so far in Kandiyohi, the top turkey producing county in Minnesota. The USDA says the birds on a seventh farm in Kandiyohi County with 9,000 turkeys will be also killed because of exposure to the other flock.

Twenty-eight Minnesota farms have now been affected by the outbreaks.

The USDA also confirmed that a backyard flock of 33 mixed birds in Juneau County of Wisconsin where bird flu was detected last week was affected by the same H5N2 virus that has hit other poultry farms across the Midwest.

Meanwhile, up to 5.3 million hens at an Iowa farm must be destroyed after the highly infectious and deadly bird flu virus was confirmed, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said Monday.

The farm in northwest Iowa's Osceola County has nearly 10 percent of the state's egg-laying hens. Iowa is home to roughly 59 million hens that lay nearly one in every five eggs consumed in the country.

Egg industry marketing experts say it's too early to predict the impact on prices, but say it's unlikely to immediately cause a spike or a shortage, because number of chickens that are to be euthanized is a little more than 1 percent of the nation's egg layers.

“Don't panic. Let's wait and see,” said poultry industry consultant Simon Shane, who also teaches poultry science and veterinary medicine at North Carolina State University. He added that if 20 million to 30 million hens are infected, consumers could start seeing prices rise.

Several Midwestern states have been affected by the outbreaks, costing turkey and chicken producers nearly 7.8

million birds since March. The virus was first detected in Minnesota, the country's top turkey-producing state, in early March and the H5N2 virus has since shown up on commercial farms in Arkansas, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. On Monday, the virus was confirmed in another turkey farm in Minnesota and a backyard flock of mixed birds in Wisconsin.

The Osceola County farm provides shell eggs and liquid egg products to the market.

"It may not have a direct effect on shell egg pricing but any time you take production out of a marketplace there's likely to be some consequence," Iowa Poultry Association Executive Director Randy Olson said. "I anticipate the market and production will recover, but right now we're reminding people that this is not a food safety issue and it's not a human health issue."

Olson said he's confident authorities have identified the extent of the outbreak and have a plan to control it.

It's the first chicken farm in Iowa to be affected by the virus, which was confirmed at a turkey farm in the state last week.

The chickens on the large operation reside in more than 20 houses, said Dustin Vande Hoef, a spokesman for Iowa Agriculture Secretary Bill Northey.

"It's a huge challenge for this producer and highlights the importance of biosecurity and other producers trying to take steps to limit the spread of this disease," he said.

The Center for Disease Control and the Iowa Department of Public Health considers the risk to people from these infections in wild birds, backyard flocks and commercial poultry, to be low. No human infections with the virus have ever been detected.