

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Leads bipartisan group urging USDA to immediately address avian flu outbreak

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) led a bipartisan group of colleagues in sending a letter to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack, urging the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to take swift action to address the ongoing outbreak of avian influenza by quickly disseminating funds provided by Congress in the Fiscal Year 2023 Agriculture Appropriations bill, which was signed into law by President Biden in December.

“This unprecedented outbreak, which has been on-going since February 2022, is devastating poultry flocks across the country and contributing to an increase in poultry and egg prices for consumers,” **the Senators wrote.** “We acknowledge APHIS’s current efforts to address the spread of the disease. However, it is imperative the agency quickly deploy additional resources and work with the states in improving biosecurity measures within the avian supply chain, including the disinfection of sites and the testing and quarantining of affected flocks.”

As of January 31, 2023, APHIS confirmed avian flu had been found in 745 flocks in 47 states, and affected over 58 million birds, directly contributing to rising egg prices. In the Fiscal Year 2023 Omnibus Appropriations Act signed into law late last year, Congress provided an increase in annual funding to address the avian influenza outbreak, including over \$64 million for improving avian health, and updated guidance on proactively mitigating the spread of disease. Additionally, Congress directed APHIS to increase outreach and engagement with poultry producers to educate them on how to proactively halt further spread.

“We request the agency expeditiously utilize the increase in annual funding provided by Congress for activities to prevent further spread of the avian influenza and to mitigate the impact this historic wave of disease has had on our states’ farmers and consumers,” **the Senators continued.**

In addition to Senator Baldwin, the letter was signed by Senators John Boozman (R-AR), Tom Carper (D-DE), Bob Casey (D-PA), Chris Coons (D-DE), Tom Cotton (R-AR), Mark Warner (D-VA), and Roger Wicker (R-MS).

Full text of the letter is available [here](#) and below.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack

Secretary

U.S. Department of Agriculture

1400 Independence Ave. S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We are writing to request the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) swiftly take further action to address the ongoing outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). This unprecedented outbreak, which has been on-going since February 2022, is devastating poultry flocks across the country and contributing to an increase in poultry and egg prices for consumers.

As of January 31, 2023, APHIS has confirmed HPAI in 745 flocks in 47 states that is affecting over 58 million birds. As a direct result, retail egg prices have more than doubled and contributed to the highest grocery price inflation in nearly 5 decades. We acknowledge APHIS’s current efforts to address the spread of the disease. However, it is imperative the agency quickly deploy additional resources and work with the states in improving biosecurity measures within the avian supply chain, including the disinfection of sites and the testing and quarantining of affected flocks.

In the Fiscal Year 2023 Omnibus Appropriations Act, Congress provided over \$64 million for improving avian health and included guidance directing APHIS to coordinate proactively with state animal health officials to mitigate the spread of HPAI. In addition, Congress directed APHIS to increase outreach and engagement with poultry producers to educate on proactive measures they can take to mitigate the spread of the virus.

We request the agency expeditiously utilize the increase in annual funding provided by Congress for activities to prevent further spread of the avian influenza and to mitigate the impact this historic wave of disease has had on our states' farmers and consumers. In addition, we request an update on recent HPAI detections, geographic regions where HPAI is most highly concentrated, and an update on depopulation efforts and indemnity payments. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,