

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Birds Flu Has Taken Flight From U.S. So Watch Your Fowls, Dept. of Agriculture Warns

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ST. CROIX – Agriculture Commissioner designee Carlos Robles said poultry, game bird and pet bird owners in the territory should closely monitor their animals in light of the confirmed infections of high pathogenic avian influenza in some areas of the United States.

Commissioner Robles said that the spread of high pathogenic avian influenza has followed the migratory pathways of wild birds and water fowl and has infected turkeys and chickens in some states.

“This has caused poultry producers in the infected areas to quarantine and depopulate millions of birds to stop the spread of the infection,” he said.

While high pathogenic avian influenza has not been detected in the Caribbean, there is much concern for the poultry in the region and the threat to food security, Robles said. The Department of Agriculture is following this closely and continues its avian influenza surveillance program in the territory, he said.

Avian influenza surveillance has been a routine animal health program since 2006 and poultry and game bird owners have been participating actively by testing their birds and registering their farms every year, according to Bethany Bradford, agriculture’s veterinarian. In addition, the Department of Agriculture monitors movement of poultry and pet birds into and out of the territory, she said.

Bradford encouraged bird and poultry owners to get their birds registered and tested, report sick or dead birds and practice biosecurity on their farms.

“Keep poultry away from wild birds and waterfowl,” she said.

Commissioner Robles warned bird and poultry owners that import regulations are subject to change and it may be necessary to restrict movement of roosters and poultry to prevent the spread of disease.

For more information on how to protect your birds and prevent disease and to report sick or dead birds, call Veterinary Services at 778-0997 or 778-0998 ext 241 or 252.