Greetings from 132 Curtiss Hall. This week’s weather is a student recruiter’s dream. It is warm and sunny. Many of the trees and tulips are in bloom. Students are lying around on central campus like it is a sandy beach on spring break. I am sure they are studying for finals next week, but the glare off the pages and the newly exposed flesh is distracting.

The warm weather will accelerate corn planting as Iowa farmers will likely plant several million acres this week. After last week’s rain the grass will grow rapidly and cattle will move to pasture if they haven’t already. Farmers will return to farming and the things that they feel they can control. It will take their mind off the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, Renewable Fuels Standards, lawsuits, legislature, weaker commodity prices, and avian influenza.

Avian influenza has hit northwest Iowa’s layer and turkey industry with a vengeance. The full extent of the outbreak is still unknown, but I wanted to share some of what we do know, or at least can expect.

From the IDALS press release on Monday… The United States has the strongest Avian Influenza (AI) surveillance program in the world. As part of the existing USDA avian influenza response plans, Federal and State partners as well as industry are responding quickly and decisively to these outbreaks by following these five basic steps: 1) Quarantine – restricting movement of poultry and poultry-moving equipment into and out of the control area; 2) Eradicate – humanely euthanizing the affected flock(s); 3) Monitor region – testing wild and domestic birds in a broad area around the quarantine area; 4) Disinfect – kills the virus in the affected flock locations; and 5) Test – confirm that poultry farms in the area are free of the virus.

The outbreak is not yet contained, but experts believe that the warmer weather will hamper its spread. The disease has a very low risk to humans and is not spread through properly cooked eggs or poultry meat. It is highly contagious among birds and is believed to have spread, at least in part, by wild birds. It is believed to enter buildings through ventilation systems or on people’s shoes and clothes. It is not hard to envision starlings or sparrows outside the exhaust fan of an infected barn moving near an inlet of a clean farm. Those same birds may also stop by a backyard flock.

The disease can be devastating to the infected farm as the birds must be humanely euthanized and disposed of properly to limit the spread of the disease with minimal environmental impact. The irony of commodity markets is that producers whose flocks are not infected may receive higher prices for their products if the outbreak reduces supply enough to impact prices. We saw it with PEDv in swine last year and crops in the drought of 2012.

Avian influenza will impact egg-laying farms differently from turkey farms, and it will likely take large farms longer to ramp up after an outbreak than small farms. First, turkey farms are often under contract to a company and a single farm is one of many locations supplying a processing plant. The contract will specify how the grower is compensated during a shutdown. Egg producers are often individual companies with production on one or two farms. They will also have pullet farms growing birds for the layer operation.
Second, turkey barns are emptied after each batch is grown, approximately 24-30 weeks from hatch to harvest, and a new one started. Once the site is declared clear of avian influenza a new batch can come in to be fed. Layers may produce for one to two years or more before being replaced and typically they are replaced one building at a time. When a layer facility is infected the entire farm must be shut down, cleaned and disinfected. Once it is cleared, the farm will begin to restock with new pullets of laying age. It will want to stagger the restocking to get back to a normal replacement cycle. Also, there are likely not enough pullets available at one time to completely stock a large farm let alone two or more large farms. So it may take several months for a laying facility to come fully up to speed. Smaller farms should be able to quickly replace their flock once they are cleared.

Based on the press about the farms I estimate that there could be in the neighborhood of 500 people employed by the infected egg farms in Osceola, O’Brien and Sioux counties. That doesn’t include the related jobs like trucking and pullet-raising or the induced jobs in retail where these employees shopped. That is a significant shock to a local economy.

It is too early to say if poultry shows at county fairs will have to be cancelled, but youth poultry projects and other small flocks in northwest Iowa are at risk of infection. Owners should know and follow the guidelines from USDA about protecting their birds [http://www.ans.iastate.edu/EIC/Templates/AvianInfluenzaBackyard.dwt](http://www.ans.iastate.edu/EIC/Templates/AvianInfluenzaBackyard.dwt). ISU Extension and Outreach will continue to provide information and updates about avian influenza on our websites.

ISU Extension and Outreach is and will continue to be involved in the response to avian influenza. The veterinary diagnostic lab is assisting the state and federal government with testing and advising commercial producers. The Iowa Concern Hotline has stepped up to partner with IDALS and will be handling calls from the public about avian influenza. ISU Extension and Outreach County Staff and Field Specialists will likely receive calls from poultry owners and citizens with questions. As we do in other crisis, we will respond, we will provide information and education, and we will help the affected people and communities get through this crisis.

**Announcements**

**Award winning colleagues**

- Jackie Comito, Iowa Learning Farms, Education and Outreach National Wetlands Award by the Environmental Law Institute in Washington, DC in May for her work with *Water Rocks! And the Iowa Learning Farms*
- Garland Dahlke, Iowa Beef Center, Regent’s Award for Staff Excellence
- Kathleen Delate, Horticulture, ISU Outstanding Achievement in Extension or Professional Practice
- Ajay Nair, Horticulture, ISU Early Achievement in Extension or Professional Practice

**North Central SARE 2013-14 Cover Crops Survey Analysis** has been released and is found at: [http://www.northcentralsare.org/Educational-Resources/From-the-Field/2013-14-Cover-Crops-Survey-Analysis](http://www.northcentralsare.org/Educational-Resources/From-the-Field/2013-14-Cover-Crops-Survey-Analysis)

**Two SARE Travel Scholarships offered for the 2015 Food Fiber and Fuel tour**

Iowa SARE Professional Development program is offering two scholarships for ANR Field Specialists and/or campus-based faculty/staff to attend the **2015 Food Fiber and Fuel tour** to be held September 15-17, 2015 in North Dakota. Download the tour brochure and agenda [here](http://www.northcentralsare.org/Educational-Resources/From-the-Field/2013-14-Cover-Crops-Survey-Analysis). To apply for a scholarship or for more information, contact Linda Naeve ([lnaeve@iastate.edu](mailto:lnaeve@iastate.edu) or 515-294-8946) by May 15.

**The National Association of County Agricultural Agents** is holding its Annual Meeting and Professional Improvement Conference (AM-PIC) hosted in Sioux Falls, SD on July 12-16, 2015. Many
of our ISUEO colleagues are helping with the planning and tours during the conference. It is an excellent opportunity to meet and learn from other extension professionals from across the U.S. The website is https://agagents.wordpress.com/. In addition to the meetings, presentations, posters and awards there are three two-day pre-conference tours and 28 tours on the last day. If you have an interest in agriculture extension I encourage you to attend.

ANR Update

ANR at Noon:
- May 29, Ray Hansen presents VAA resources for business feasibility or start-up questions.
- Previous ANR at Noon presentations are archived and available at: http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ag/staff/anratnoon.html

Staff update:
- a. SEIA Field Agronomist, Rebecca Ahlers started April 27.
- b. West Central Field Agronomist. Rich Pope has been hired on an hourly basis to provide support.
- c. NEIA Ag Engineer, remains open.
- d. NEIA Farm Management will be filled by Melissa O’Rourke in the fall.
- e. NWIA Farm Management (currently O’Rourke), applicant evaluation underway.
- f. Forage specialist, interview complete.
- g. Iowa Pork Industry Center Director interview completed. Now considering internal candidates.
- h. Poultry Vet, short-term Dr. Dan Shaw shared with University of Missouri. Long-term, Dr. Yuko Sato will start in August.

Extension Admin Update

- Annual budgeting discussions underway with leadership team.
- Upcoming Professional Development events include Social Media, Branding Boot Camp, Effective Adult Learning, Crucial Conservations and others.
- 2014 Annual report is available; please share with stakeholders where appropriate to get the word out about ISUEO. http://www.extension.iastate.edu/our-story/node/27722/ .