



# The Chick Papers

A Monthly Newsletter from the Georgia Poultry Laboratory

October 2015

## Georgia Avian Influenza Hotline

**770-766-6850**

With migratory birds returning South by way of the Atlantic and Central Flyways, there is an increased risk of infection from the Avian Influenza Virus (AIV) in backyard and/or commercial poultry operations. Georgia has established a dedicated AI Hotline phone number that backyard bird owners can call when they feel they have problem flocks with clinical signs consistent with AIV. The Hotline has many features that will expedite evaluations of the suspect backyard flocks and elicit a prompt response from poultry clinicians throughout the State of Georgia. Some of the key features of the hotline system are included below.

**Backyard flock owners can call the Georgia AI Hotline at any time.** The Georgia AI Hotline is a dedicated phone number reserved primarily for suspect AIV inquiries. If the call is made during regular business hours, an administrative secretary will screen the call and ask the owner a series of questions including flock owner name, contact information (phone number, email address), flock location, size and other pertinent information. An assessment form is completed on the problem(s) the owner is experiencing with the flock. Each question on the AI assessment sheet is weighted for relativeness to AIV infections and a total score is tabulated. If the total score exceeds a threshold value, the secretary immediately contacts a clinician; providing all acquired information including the assessment form. The clinician will then contact the backyard owner immediately (with some understanding of the flock status). Flocks with sub-threshold scores are communicated to the clinician on the same day and the clinician will follow up with the owner within 24 hours.

If the call is missed by the secretary, the backyard caller listens to a short greeting that asks for owner name, contact phone number and a short description of the problems observed in the flock. A series of emails will automatically be sent to seven members of the Georgia AI Response Team. The email contains an attached voice recording of the backyard owner's flock problems. One of the seven members will contact the backyard owner, gather pertinent information and complete the assessment form with the owner over the phone. The responder will then contact all members of the AI Response Team via email to let them know the actions that have been initiated for the flock (flock visit, testing, mortality observation only, etc.).

**Georgia backyard flock owners calling into the USDA hotline are diverted to the Georgia AI Hotline.** If the owner calls during regular business hours, the Regional USDA Center provides the Georgia AI Hotline number to the caller. If the call to the USDA Center is made after regular business hours or during the weekend, the USDA hotline system automatically detects the backyard flock owner's state of occupancy (by the phone number) and directs the call to the USDA regional center representing Georgia. The regional center connects the caller to the Georgia AI Hotline number. Once connected, the call will be processed as described above.

**Backyard owner calls to the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) are diverted to the Georgia AI Hotline.** During business hours, the Hotline number is provided to the backyard owner by GDA supervisors and field inspectors. After hours and weekend calls are captured via email by the supervisors and inspectors and the email is forwarded to the Georgia AI Hotline email system to be processed as described above. The emails provided by GDA include a voicemail attachment of owner contact information and a short description of problems seen in the flock.

**County Extension Agents are assisting Georgia in the assessment of suspect AI backyard flocks.** When backyard flock owners call their local extension agent to report flock problems, the agent gathers important details about the flock and asks the caller questions on the AI Assessment form. The agent will then call the Georgia AI Hotline to initiate the Georgia response if the scores are above threshold values. The agent can include the assessment form as an attachment in an email to the Georgia AI Hotline Response Team. If assessment scores are less than threshold values, the owner is encouraged to call the main Gainesville laboratory number at 770-766-6810 during business hours.

Summary: GPLN is working closely with colleagues at USDA, GDA, University of Georgia Poultry Science Department and the Georgia County Extension Services to make sure AI suspicious flocks in Georgia are evaluated quickly and that "AI Negative" determinations are made without delay. Undoubtedly, the enhanced scrutiny of backyard flocks that has occurred over the last few months since the initiation of the AI Hotline system will generate many false alarms for AI infections. However, the Georgia Poultry Industry must accurately evaluate any and all flocks that have symptoms consistent with AIV infection. The "ALL IN or ALL GONE" theme not only applies to commercial companies accelerating their biosecurity practices to prevent AI, but could also be used to describe Georgia's accelerated efforts to evaluate and diagnose AI (if it exists) in any and all Georgia flocks including backyard flocks. The Georgia AI Hotline number was activated a month ago and the Hotline system has processed and evaluated 4 backyard flocks. All have been determined negative for AI infections.

Tours and Visitors

- Oct 6: UNG Tour
- Dr. Dufour-Zavala attended the Poultry World Ribbon Cutting at the Georgia National Fair on Oct 8. Len Chappell attended the Georgia National Fair on Oct 14 & 15 as a volunteer to welcome visitors to Poultry World and answer questions about the many poultry exhibitions. Dr. Anderson served at Poultry World as Shift Coordinator for the volunteers on Oct 10. Pictured is a class from Kay Road Elementary School with company volunteers from Tyson Oglethorpe. Poultry World hosted tens of thousands of visitors.



Back row (left to right) are Arnel Gallardo, Scott McCrosy, Randy Yelvestor and Len Chappell (GPLN).



Mohammad Ehsan

• Dr. Mohammad Ehsan completed an internship with the Gainesville Lab in early October. He is a poultry medicine PhD student at the University of Tehran, Iran. He started his internship travel with Cobb Arkansas and he continued with PDRC, NPIP, GPLN and finally Mississippi State University. Dr. Ehsan's research focus is on Mycoplasma infections in avian species. He is currently applying for the Masters of Avian Medicine Program at UGA. During the internship he observed testing procedures in many departments and had two days of farm visits.

- Oct 13: Dr. Stan Crane (Veterinary Medical Officer, GDA) met with GPLN and other GDA officials to discuss the logistics of backyard flock testing in an Avian influenza event. Chelsea Brown and Jason Smith will coordinate backyard flock testing.
- Oct 20: Farm Credit Tour
- Oct 20-22: Jesse Kimbrell, James Brantley and Dr. Anderson attended the Sunbelt Expo.
- Oct 23: Wisdom Project Tour



Chelsea Brown and Jason Smith



(Left to right) Mr. Dave Neff, Mr. Jeff Hall, Dr. Louise Dufour-Zavala, Mr. Mike Giles, Mr. Bobby Miller.



Dr. Anderson



Joe and Doris Colston (front), James Brantley and Jesse Kimbrell (back).

GPLN Events



Selena York

- Oct 19: Fire extinguisher training
- Oct 28: Kathleen Owen represented GPLN at the Lanier Tech Job Fair
- Oct 30: Haunted Lab Halloween Party
- Welcome October GPLN new employees: Carrie Kennedy (Serology), Jasmine Ray (Bacteriology), Jennifer Irvin (Receiving) and Victoria Adeyemi (Bacteriology)



Kathleen Owen



(Left to right) Belinda Pham, Karla Tavira and Selena York.