

A professional headshot of Dr. Robert A. M. Lee. He is a middle-aged man with a receding hairline, wearing glasses, a dark suit, a white shirt, and a yellow patterned tie. He is smiling slightly and looking directly at the camera. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and green.

The President's Corner

The golf tournament, which is an important source of revenue for Virginia Poultry Federation (VPF), had a packed field of 33 teams in the morning and 32 in the afternoon at Spotswood Country Club in Harrisonburg. Many thanks to our sponsors, who make these events possible and are recognized in this newsletter. We also appreciate the many industry volunteers who plan and implement these events.

Turning to our mission of promoting a positive business climate for poultry in Virginia, VPF participated in meetings with members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation during the National Turkey Federation's Annual Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. during July. We addressed critical topics for our industry, including the 2022 High Path Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak in the United States, workforce availability, and the next Farm Bill. Thank you to NTF President Joel Brandenberger and his team for hosting another successful conference and to Joel for providing an update on federal issues for this newsletter!

Unfortunately, additional cases have occurred in other states even during the recent, hot summer weeks, and experts fear a resurgence in the fall. Wild fowl continue to transport this virus in their migrations within and between the north-south flyways across the country. The Virginia Poultry Disease Task Force – consisting of poultry industry veterinarians and live production staff, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, USDA, and other agencies – will continue to monitor and manage the ongoing threat of HPAI. Please do your part by practicing biosecurity every day! Please reach out to me directly at hobey@vapoultry.com or my cell phone at 540-478-8199 anytime with suggestions or ideas for VPF programs and activities or whenever we can be of assistance.

Upcoming Events

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
29	30	31	1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	1

VPF Year End Report
December, 2022



A Minute With the Vet Virginia State Veterinarian, Dr. Charles Broaddus

After being apprehensive for much of the winter and spring about the potential of a Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak in Virginia's commercial poultry, I joined you all in breathing a big sigh of relief when we finally approached the warmer temperatures of summer, when the flu virus generally is less able to survive in the environment, and we typically see fewer cases nationwide. Avoiding such an outbreak was the direct result of biosecurity measures taken by poultry growers and others – although practicing good biosecurity can be a hassle, your efforts in that area paid off. Thank you for doing that.

While AI is less common in the summer months, and we can all relax a bit, we are not out of the woods. In July, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources reported the detection of HPAI in vultures found dead at a Loudon County landfill, indicating that the virus is still circulating, even in the summer. In addition, Florida, of all places, just had their first detection of HPAI in poultry. And most epidemiologists think that this strain of the H5N1 virus has not yet run its course in wild waterfowl, and anticipate that we will again see domestic poultry infected due to exposure to wild waterfowl in the cool seasons to come.

Again, thank you - the biosecurity measures you all took were critically important in avoiding an HPAI outbreak this past year. I encourage all involved with raising commercial poultry to make those high levels of biosecurity a routine practice.

Sincerely,
Charlie Broaddus, DVM, PhD
State Veterinarian



Addressing Mental Health

Over the past few years, farmers and ranchers have experienced significant economic stressors. These challenges contribute to higher rates of stress, mental illness, and suicide in farm families. To help address this mental health crisis, farm advocacy groups have developed resources like the **National Farmers Union's Farm Crisis Center** and **American Farm Bureau Federation's Farm State of Mind** website, which features a directory of rural mental health resources in every U.S. state. **Farm Credit has its Rural Resilience** program, which focuses on mental health and stress management.

If you, or someone you know needs help, please call the **National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 800-273-TALK**

Talkin' Turkey with NTF President, Joel Brandenberger

Talk about a challenging ride! If you'd asked anyone in the turkey industry on January 1 about their focus going into the new year, the odds are good that the post-pandemic market would have been top on the list. However, within just a month, all eyes were on the detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in the United States.

Since the first commercial HPAI detection in February, industry and state and federal officials have focused all resources on an efficient, effective response. The National Turkey Federation (NTF) and its members approached the outbreak with an "all hands on deck" mentality to quickly detect the virus and limit the threat of spread. To date, 5.5 million turkeys have been lost to HPAI. While ongoing HPAI detections in backyard flocks indicate the virus is still present in the environment, there is reason to believe we are past the worst of the current outbreak. Thankfully, Virginia's commercial poultry production was spared from HPAI. Nevertheless, the impact of the virus could still be felt throughout the grower community as farms implemented enhanced biosecurity practices and waited to see where the next case would be found.



Despite fewer losses than those experienced in the 2015 HPAI outbreak, it is clear that we must identify ways to continue reducing the impact of the virus on the turkey industry. NTF's newly formed HPAI Task Force is focused on several initiatives, including exploring new international rules that would encourage the use of vaccines to eliminate an outbreak, enhancing biosecurity, expanding indemnity coverage and seeking opportunities for additional research and science. This was a major topic of discussion as NTF members representing turkey production nationwide, including VPF's Hobe Bauhan and several other representatives from the Commonwealth, participated in more than 60 meetings on Capitol Hill during the Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C., last month. These meetings served as an opportunity to highlight the need for continued resources dedicated to HPAI response and support for the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program in the upcoming 2023 Farm Bill. Members also highlighted the need for expanded wild bird surveillance by USDA across all U.S. flyways to help serve as an early warning indicator of HPAI.

While HPAI is top of mind, there are several other issues at the federal level NTF is closely tracking. The Biden administration has been active on environmental issues, and a number of these could significantly impact the turkey industry, including a revised Waters of the United States definition and regulation of essential chemicals, such as formaldehyde. Another extremely critical area NTF is engaged in is USDA's efforts to reduce foodborne illnesses in poultry products. New policies enacted as part of these efforts could have a significant impact on turkey production, and more information is expected to be released this fall.

From the HPAI response and environmental issues to the upcoming Farm Bill process, there is no shortage of federal issues at play for the turkey industry. NTF remains committed to serving as the voice of the turkey industry as the federation works to advance the membership's priorities. While it has been a challenging time in the turkey industry, your dedication to fulfilling the critical mission of delivering nutritious turkey products to tables across the globe is more important ever. Our team is here to support you, and I hope you will reach out with any questions about how federal policies may affect the Virginia turkey industry.

What's Up, Peeps?

A look at some of our youth organizations...

Virginia FFA



Virginia FFA hosted a record 1,714 Virginia FFA Members at Virginia Tech for the 96th Annual State FFA Convention, June 27-30th. During the 4-day event, members attend workshops, compete in Career and Leadership Development Events and celebrate their accomplishments. The biggest news each year is the installment of a new slate of Virginia State Officers. This team has hit the ground running with multiple trainings, attending Washington Leadership Summit, Farm Bureau Young Farmer's Summer Expo, Virginia FFA Leadership camp and this week, the Virginia Ag Expo! This year, one of the highlights was the Career & Opportunity Expo. Held in Lane Stadium and hosting a variety of businesses, organizations and education – members were encouraged to have meaningful conversations with industry stakeholders and explore a wide spectrum of opportunities. Members enjoyed free popsicles from Virginia Farm Bureau and free ice cream from Homestead Creamery. Virginia FFA is especially grateful to Virginia Poultry Federation for their ongoing support of the Poultry Career Development Events and Proficiency Awards and welcomes opportunities to partner with the Poultry Industry!



Virginia 4-H



On June 27, 2022 members of the Poultry and Egg Services Team helped coordinate the Virginia Poultry Youth Judging Contest held at Virginia State FFA Convention in Blacksburg. The Virginia Poultry Judging Contest serves as the 4-H and FFA State poultry judging contests. The winning teams from each contest will go onto their respective National contest to represent Virginia. Members of Poultry and Egg Services worked to collect poultry and egg products for the students to evaluate. Whole chickens, various parts, fully cooked chicken products, and eggs were utilized for evaluation. The event is typically held in April at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds, but due to Avian Influenza restrictions, this year's was held at the Virginia FFA Convention. The students identified and judged various parts for quality factors as well as evaluated whole chickens and eggs for quality factors. Students also evaluated live production hens via video and presented oral reasons on the class. Approximately 100 4-H and FFA Members from across the Commonwealth participated in this year's event. Youth Day is made possible by the Virginia Poultry Federation, local poultry companies, VDACS, and 4-H volunteers.



Spotlight on Composting

by Gary Flory, Virginia Dept. of Environmental Quality

Composting Poultry Carcasses During Avian Influenza Outbreaks

Virginia has been fortunate during the 2022 highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak: with a single detection at a backyard flock, we have fared far better than many other states. Although the 2015 HPAI outbreak was the largest animal disease emergency in US history, this year's outbreak is coming close in terms of its negative impact on the poultry industry.

Let's take a quick look at the numbers.

	2015	2022
<i>Total Infected Flocks</i>	232	395
<i>Commercial Flocks</i>	211	188
<i>Backyard Flocks</i>	21	207
<i>States Impacted</i>	15	38
<i>Total birds affected</i>	50.4 million	40.13 million

Unfortunately, it is too early to tell if the warmer summer weather will end this outbreak. In late July, new cases were detected in both Utah and Florida. Likewise, we don't know what the fall will look like as waterfowl begin their migration. Given these uncertainties, it is important for producers to understand both the mortality management process and how they can be involved in the process.

Disposing of Infected Carcasses and Litter

Carcass disposal methods have changed considerably since the avian influenza outbreaks in 1983 and 2002. Today, in-house composting of infected carcasses and litter is the preferred disposal method. Virginia's poultry companies successfully implemented this method in 2007 with the low pathogenic avian influenza cases in Pendleton County, West Virginia and Shenandoah County, Virginia. Eighty-five percent of the 50 million birds impacted by the 2015 HPAI outbreak were composted, as were a majority of the birds in this current outbreak. Poultry producers are often given the option of constructing the compost windrows themselves or having a USDA contractor do the work. A number of factors influence the decision, including the availability of equipment or personnel, and some producers choose to do their own composting and be reimbursed for the activity. In order to make the best decision, it is useful to understand the composting process.

Compost Windrow Construction Principles

Although composting during an avian influenza outbreak can feel overwhelming, a compost windrow is fairly simple, with only three components: a base layer, a windrow core, and an insulating cap.

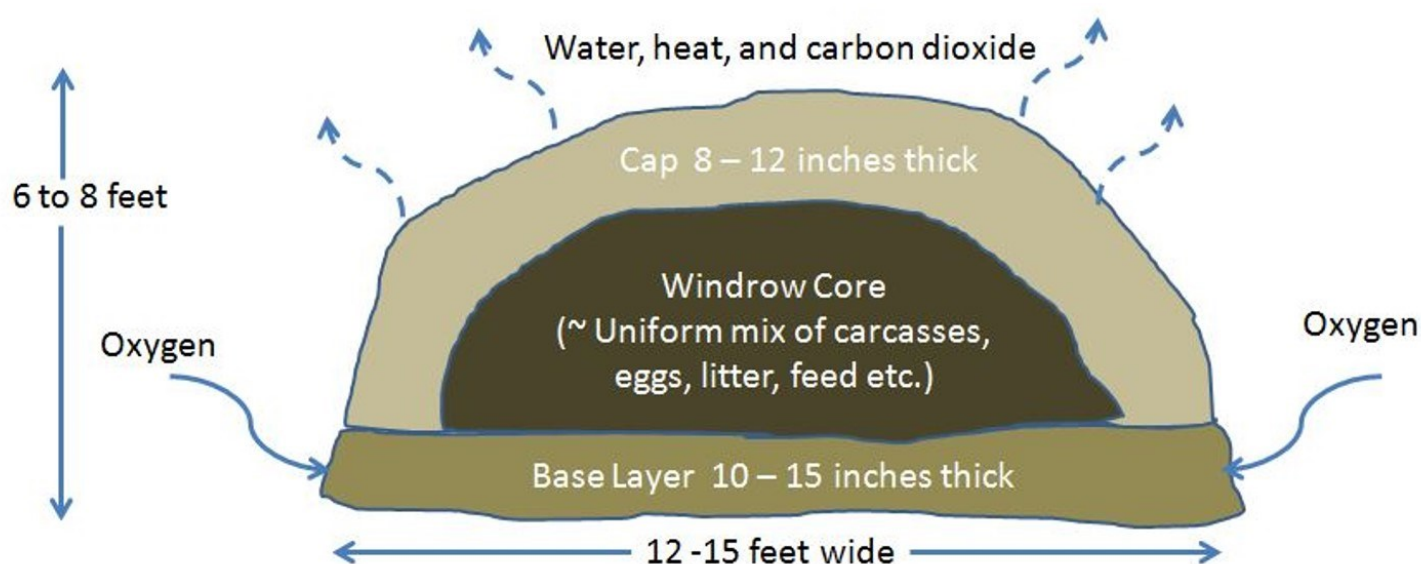


Figure 1. Cross Section of Compost Windrow

The base of the windrow is the most critical part. It must be thick and porous enough to allow oxygen to enter the windrow to facilitate microbial activity. Building a windrow on top of caked manure, for example, will not allow adequate oxygen flow, and will result in a windrow that does not reach the temperatures necessary to inactivate the avian influenza virus.

The core of the windrow is a mixture of carcasses and a carbon material. In most cases, the carbon is simply the litter that the birds were raised on. In some cases, it may be necessary to bring in additional carbon material such as wood chips or shavings to mix in with the carcasses. When the core has adequate amounts of oxygen and moisture, and an appropriate ratio of carbon material to carcasses, microbes naturally present in the environment reproduce and generate heat, which works to decompose the carcasses and is a factor in virus inactivation.

The last part of the compost windrow is the cap. The cap is a layer of clean carbon material used to insulate the windrow. The cap not only keeps heat inside the windrow in cooler temperatures, but it also keeps odors from the decomposing carcasses within the windrow to reduce the attraction of flies and scavengers.

Windrow Construction Steps

The steps for constructing a windrow can vary depending on the type of poultry house design, depth of litter, method of depopulation, etc. However, they typically include:

- Depopulation
- Clearing a central alley
- Constructing the windrow
- Placing the core on the base
- Capping the windrow

Depopulation

The producer is generally not involved in depopulation activities. Depopulation may be conducted by the integrator, state or federal officials, or by federal contractors. In some cases, like in the photo below, the birds may die as a result of the HPAI virus.

Clearing a Central Alley

The first step in windrow construction is generally clearing an alley for the windrow in the center of the poultry house. During this process, all litter and birds will be cleared from this area and piled along the sides of the alley.



Constructing the Windrow Base

The base is constructed by placing 10 to 15 inches of clean carbon in the cleared center alley. Since the purpose of the base is to allow oxygen to flow into the windrow, it is important to construct the base without compacting it. Therefore, the base is typically built from one end, without driving over portions of the base already constructed.

Placing the Core

When placing the carcasses and litter on the base, the operator should work to ensure they are mixed thoroughly. Sections of the windrow that are not mixed well may not heat appropriately or generate excessive leachate.



Capping the Windrow

Once the core is constructed, it is capped with 8 to 12 inches of clean carbon material.

Next Steps

Once the windrows are constructed, they are allowed to compost for 14 days, turned, and allowed to compost for an additional 14 days. Windrow temperatures are taken daily for the entire 28-day composting process. After completing this process, the compost is removed from the poultry houses and stored for use as a soil amendment.

For additional information, you may contact Gary Flory at the Valley Regional Office of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality at 804-212-7018 or by email at gary.flory@deq.virginia.gov



Thank You to our golf sponsors!



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Spotswood Country Club on August 4, 2022



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SNACKS & BEVERAGES

Canteen

Have you registered for our Grower Appreciation Dinner yet? Do it today!

Tuesday, Sept. 13 4:40-7:30pm
On Sunny Slope Farm
1825 Sunny Slope Ln, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

The Evening Schedule

4:30 pm - 7:30 pm Visit with vendors, sponsors & friends— Live music by the Spencer Hatcher Band!
5:00 pm - 7:00 pm BBQ chicken & turkey dinner available
7:00 pm- Remarks by VPF president, Hobey Bauhan and prize drawings

VPF Members: Two complimentary tickets; additional family members are \$10.00
New Grower Members: Join VPF at a discounted rate of \$30.00 (dues will be \$60.00 for following years)
Non-VPF Members: \$25.00
VPF Members and New Member children 10 and under are free (limit 5)

If you did not receive a printed invitation, please feel free to call the number below before Sept. 5 and leave us a message, including your name and number attending, or [click here to register](#).

P.O. Box 2277 Harrisonburg, VA 22801

540-433-2451

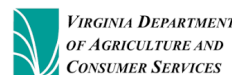


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