



Defend the Flock Newsletter Summer Edition 2023

# Defend the Flock: Your Biosecurity Bulletin

## Q&A Vet for a Day: A Talk with Dr. Mary Donahue

We asked Dr. Mary Donahue, Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO), Poultry Health Team, at APHIS Veterinary Services, what it is like to “Defend our Flocks.”

### 1. How and why did you choose a career with APHIS? I grew



*up outside a very small town in northern Indiana named Osceola. It was a very rural setting and we kept backyard poultry. We always got new birds in the spring.*

*My family had strict rules not allowing animals in the house, however, I would sometimes sneak them in. I once brought ducklings into the bathtub which upset my mother. I had to clean the entire bathroom and disinfect the bathtub with*

*bleach. It was quite the biosecurity lesson for me.*

*Because of my experiences and love for animals and the outdoors, I chose to study veterinary medicine. I had a private practice where I worked primarily with farm animals—mostly dairy cattle and later with small animals and horses.*

*Infectious disease has always fascinated me, so I pursued a Masters degree in Preventive Veterinary Medicine and Epidemiology from the University of Minnesota, after which I became an epidemiology officer with APHIS.*

*It has been an interesting journey to work with all different kinds of species. My time spent in emergency response in these previous roles prepared me for the transition to the poultry health team and responding to avian influenza and virulent Newcastle disease as a member of an Incident Management Team.*

*continued*

## The Next Generation of Flock Defenders



The Flock Defender Youth Program is an extension of the **Defend the Flock** biosecurity awareness campaign and includes resources and activities for the next generation of poultry-keepers. APHIS provides youth, parents, students and their leaders and teachers with many digital resources they can use during meetings, classes, and when caring for their flocks.

### Flock Facts: Test Your Knowledge

is an interactive game where students will travel around a poultry farm and answer true or false questions related to biosecurity principles laid out by the National Poultry Improvement Plan. This game is recommended for grades 4-8.



**The Biosecurity Education Kit** includes games and puzzles, coloring pages, quizzes, and a biosecurity glossary to help future and aspiring poultry growers learn about biosecurity.

**Biosecurity Workbook.** Whether you are new to poultry or already own birds, make poultry biosecurity an “every day, every time” practice. The **Defend the Flock** Biosecurity Workbook features seasonal tips and worksheets to create and record your personal biosecurity plan.

## Report Sick Birds

If you see signs of illness, take action right away!

Veterinarian  
Cooperative Extension Office  
State Veterinarian/Animal or Poultry Diagnostic Lab  
USDA

Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

866.536.7593





Defend the Flock Newsletter Summer Edition 2023

**Q&A** Vet for a Day:  
A Talk with Dr. Mary Donahue

*continued*

**2. How is poultry disease transmitted between wild birds and domestic poultry?** Wild birds can spread disease through feces and droppings they leave behind when they are on or around poultry premises. For example, if there's a pond or an area where wild ducks hang out, and the backyard poultry share the same area, those birds are exposed to the virus from the wild ducks. Other interactions may happen if there is a problem with the integrity of the poultry house and wild birds get in or workers track the virus into the house. Poultry growers should be careful to not allow their domestic birds to interact with wild birds, especially during breeding and migratory seasons.



**Warm weather brings more critters to your yard, but don't give wild birds, rodents, and insects a free lunch! Remove spilled or uneaten feed every day, and make sure storage units are secure and free of holes.**

**3. What can be done to protect poultry from infected wildlife?** Biosecurity is the first and most important thing for any producer!

- **Keep visitors to a minimum.** If you have a friend that has birds, they should not be coming into the areas where you hold your birds at all. If visitors do come into your poultry areas, make sure they are taking the same biosecurity precautions as you.
- **Keep wild birds away.** Wild birds are attracted to water and spilled feed. If possible, feed your birds indoors where spillage is less likely to attract wild birds. If there is any spillage, clean it up immediately. Also, look for other ways to deter wild birds from coming near your flock.

- **Clean everything.** Don't enter the poultry area unless everything is clean, even your clothes. If you step on droppings from a duck or a goose while walking in your yard, you can track it into the poultry area. Have a pair of shoes or boots that are exclusively for the poultry area and clean those frequently. If you use disposable booties, make sure they are sturdy and don't tear.
- **Don't share equipment.** Unfortunately, people use Craigslist or even Facebook to swap poultry equipment or birds. Even if they say it has been cleaned and disinfected, thoroughly clean it again and let it sit in the sunlight to destroy any remaining viruses or bacteria. You can also put it aside for 10-14 days before use as an additional precaution.
- **Monitor your birds.** Keep an eye out for any kind of warning signs, including not eating normally, not laying eggs, respiratory signs, or sudden death. It can be challenging for small poultry producers to monitor feed intake, but if you have any concerns, contact your veterinarian right away.

**Defend the Flock Biosecurity Checklists available in:**

- Arabic
- Chinese
- Hmong
- Spanish
- Tagalog
- Vietnamese

**TRAINING HIGHLIGHTS:**

**Navigating Avian Influenza: Your Questions Answered**

APHIS hosted a free webinar that provided an opportunity for listeners to ask questions about highly pathogenic avian influenza and have them answered live.

The experts featured were

- Dr. Patricia Fox, National Epidemiology Officer for the Poultry Health Team, APHIS
- Dr. Maggie Baldwin, State Veterinarian and Director of the Animal Health Division at the Colorado Department of Agriculture

You can watch a replay of the webinar or view the transcript at the **Defend the Flock** Resource Center, under the "Webinars" tab.

For more information about how to keep your flocks healthy, follow **Defend the Flock** on **Facebook** and **Twitter** and visit [www.aphis.usda.gov/animalhealth/defendtheflock](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animalhealth/defendtheflock).

