



**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES**  
**Updates from the State Veterinarian's Office** **Spring 2023**

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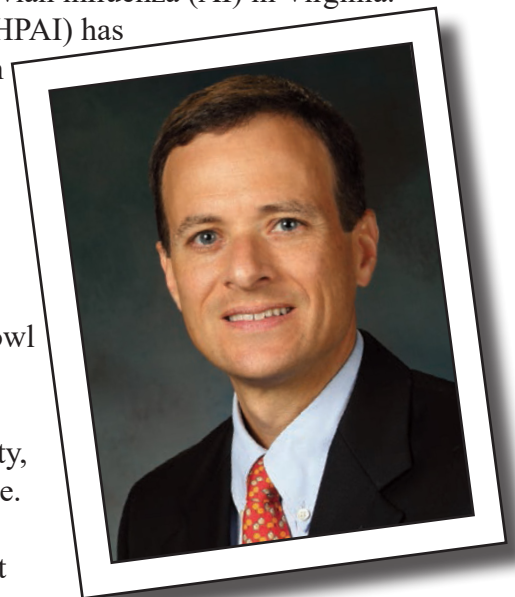


Foreign animal and emerging disease preparedness is a big part of what we do at VDACS, and there has been a lot of activity in this area in the past year. For the first time since 2007, and just the second since 2002, there have been detections of avian influenza (AI) in Virginia. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has

been detected in almost every state in the nation since the current outbreak began in January 2022. Last year, there were six non-commercial backyard HPAI detections. Recently, there were HPAI positive detections in Rockingham County. With the disease still prevalent in wild waterfowl and vultures, the virus can still be introduced to flocks through the air. So we continue to focus on biosecurity, surveillance, prevention, and response.

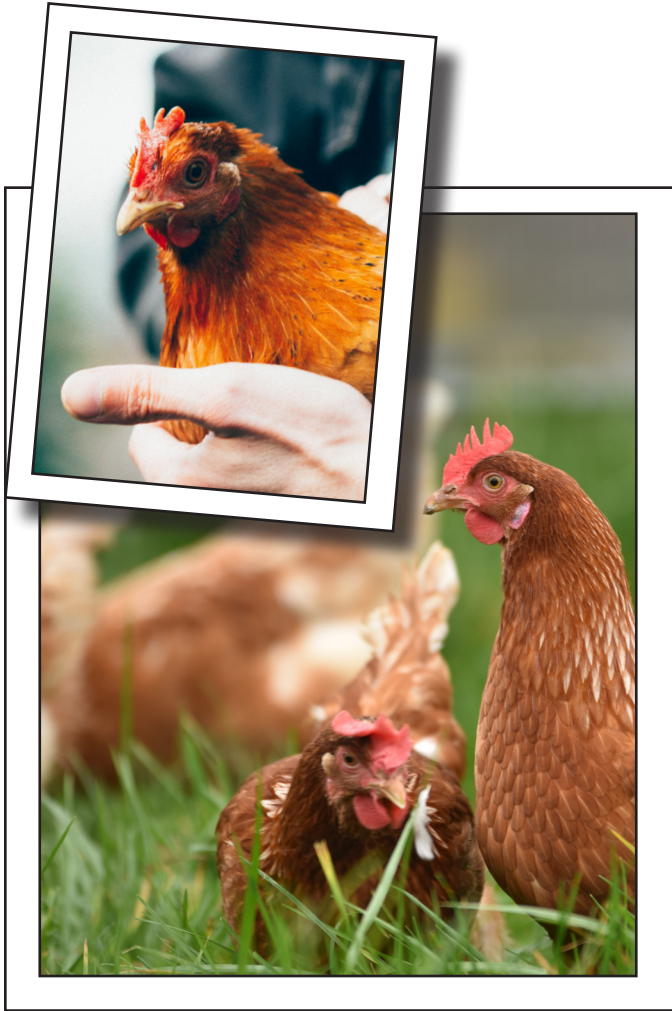
While a lot of attention is appropriately dedicated to HPAI right now,

we also work on preparedness for African Swine Fever (ASF), Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), and other economically important diseases including the recently introduced disease of cattle, *Theileriosis*. ASF continues to be a very big concern, with the disease spreading around the globe and causing high death losses in swine. The recent detection of ASF in the Dominican Republic is a significant concern for the swine industry, and we are working with them to be prepared, should ASF be detected in the US.



*Please reach out to any of our staff if you have any questions about HPAI, ASF, FMD, or preparedness for any other foreign animal disease.*

# HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA IN VIRGINIA



In the US, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is a foreign animal disease, but in 2022, it was not so foreign. With 49 states reporting detections and over 50 million birds affected, the HPAI outbreak required thousands of hours for USDA veterinary medical officers, state veterinarians, and their staff to manage. Six incidents occurred in backyard flocks in Virginia in 2022, and there are currently HPAI detections in Rockingham County.

Avian influenza virus H5/N1 is highly contagious and can be fatal in chickens, turkeys, and ducks. The epidemiology of the outbreak confirms that the disease is transmitting from

wild birds as they follow their migration flyways. Resident wild birds can also pick up the virus and transmit disease with or without clinical signs. There have been several large black headed vulture die-offs across Virginia and the Department of Wildlife Resources confirmed HPAI in those birds.

The goal of the VDACS response to HPAI is to quickly contain and eradicate the disease and protect the poultry industry. Detection requires quarantine of the facility and typically depopulation and disinfection. Surveillance is conducted by phone to the backyard producers and testing of commercial birds. The property usually must remain free of susceptible bird species for a period of time. Testing for the virus may occur before birds are allowed back in.

Economic disruption, trade losses and animal losses impact the total costs of such an outbreak in this country and many others. USDA reports these findings to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) as well as international trading partners. USDA continues to communicate with trading partners to encourage adherence to WOAH standards and minimize trade impacts when HPAI is detected only in non-commercial backyard flocks.

Biosecurity practices such as use of foot baths, changing shoes and clothing to go into chicken coops, cleaning and disinfecting tools, and confinement of birds can help to reduce infection with HPAI and production losses. The USDA maintains excellent resources online about biosecurity and the “Defend the Flock” program.

Our VDACS labs serve as resources for necropsy and disease testing for backyard and commercial poultry producers.

VDACS maintains a list of veterinarians that examine and treat chickens and other backyard poultry. Contact us if you need to make referrals or want to be added to that list.

# AFRICAN SWINE FEVER AND THE NEW PLAN

African Swine Fever (ASF) is a highly contagious viral disease of domestic and feral pigs of all ages. ASF can produce a variety of signs, from acute to chronic, depending on the strain of the virus and the immunity of the pig. Acute signs typically include fever, loss of appetite, depression, coughing, and hemorrhages that cause blackening of the skin. Mortality rates can be as high as 95-100% in pigs affected by highly severe strains. Chronic signs are reduced growth, skin lesions, swelling, and secondary infections. ASF is found in countries around the world, including Africa, Asia and parts of the European Union. It has yet to be found in the United States, but it has recently spread to the Dominican Republic. If an outbreak of ASF were to occur in the United States, it could have significant trade implications.



Because ASF and other diseases such as Classical Swine Fever pose a threat to the US pork industry, a new program is being developed in a collaborative effort of pork industry professionals, pork producers, and government officials. The new

program called US Swine Health Improvement Plan (US SHIP) is being modeled after the National Poultry Improvement Plan. US SHIP will establish national standards centered on disease prevention and the ability to demonstrate freedom of disease in the event of an outbreak. In the event of a disease occurrence in the US, participation in the plan will provide a pathway to resume interstate and international trade. US SHIP is a voluntary program. Enrollment is done through the Virginia State Veterinarian's office (**804.786.2483** or **vastatevet@vdacs.virginia.gov**). Once enrolled, the participant needs to complete a biosecurity survey and demonstrate competency in providing 30 days of animal movement data electronically. There is no fee to participate. If you have clients with swine that may be interested in participating, please reach out to the State Veterinarian's Office.

For more information:



**Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services • State Veterinarian's Office**  
102 Governor Street • Richmond, Virginia 23219 • [www.vdacs.virginia.gov/animals.shtml](http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/animals.shtml)

# FDA FURTHER LIMITS SALE OF PRESCRIPTION VETERINARY DRUGS

The causes of antimicrobial resistance in both human and veterinary medicine have long been debated. The FDA views the loss of effectiveness of antimicrobials important in human medicine as a serious public health threat. To help address this issue, the FDA has been guided by two principles ensuring the appropriate use of antimicrobials used in animals that are important in human medicine.

The use of medically important antimicrobial drugs in food-producing animals should be limited to those uses that:

**Principle 1:** Are considered necessary for assuring animal health.

**Principle 2:** Include veterinary oversight or consultation.

Following these principles, the FDA has previously issued rules that encouraged manufacturers to change usage of medically important antimicrobials used in feed or water to Voluntary Feed Directive or prescription (Rx) marketing status. This was implemented in 2016. In 2018, the FDA issued a five-year plan encouraging antimicrobial stewardship in food producing animals. An important part of this plan was to bring the remaining antimicrobials marketed as over-the-counter (OTC) under veterinary oversight. The FDA has set a target date of June 11, 2023, that any antimicrobials entering commerce must be labeled as prescription only. Existing OTC inventory can continue to be sold. It should be noted that since 2003 when the FDA issued new guidance for approval of new antimicrobial animal drug applications, all new antimicrobial drugs on the market have been Rx only.

To purchase antimicrobials after June 11, 2023, farmers must have a valid veterinarian client patient relationship with a licensed veterinarian. Most producers have this already since most antimicrobials

used to treat major economically important diseases, such as bovine respiratory disease, are already prescription. However, there are still producers, many of them “lifestyle” or non-commercial farmers who do not use the services of a veterinarian; especially in areas without a food animal or mixed practice veterinarian.

Veterinarians in Virginia will have many opportunities to interact with producers who contact them to purchase these relabeled antimicrobials. VDACS encourages veterinarians to use these opportunities to educate and advise these potential new clients on the judicious use of antimicrobials.

The most common antimicrobials effected by this rule are Penicillins, Oxytetracyclines, Sulfas, Lincocin, Tylosin and Cephapirin. The official list can be found at:

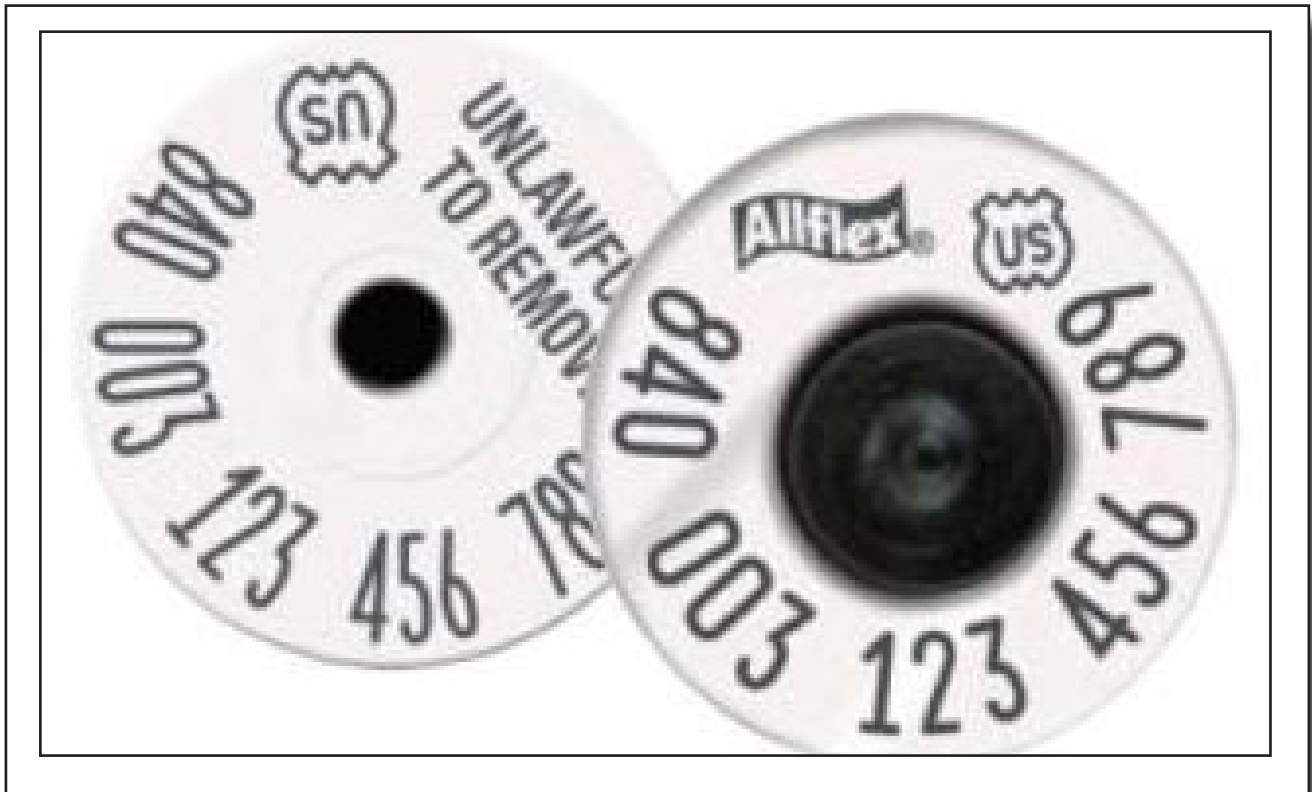


VDACS has developed a flyer that is available for mailing or public posting for your use. Please contact us for copies.



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# FREE RADIO FREQUENCY IDENTIFICATION CATTLE TAGS



*The Office of Veterinary Services has a large number of 840-RFID tags in stock and practitioners are encouraged to begin using electronic ID if they are not already doing so.*

As many veterinary practitioners are aware, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has been distributing 840-series Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFID) for use in cattle at no cost for over 10 years. To date, over 500,000 tags have been distributed to livestock markets, veterinarians, and cattle producers in Virginia. Beginning in 2020, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) began providing free 840-RFID tags nationwide for distribution to veterinarians and cattle producers. The VDACS Office of Veterinary Services has a large number of 840-RFID tags in stock and practitioners are encouraged to begin using

electronic ID if they are not already doing so. All tags are button-style, white in color, half-duplex (HDX) devices and can be used for all regulatory activities that require official ID including testing, vaccination and interstate movement. The primary focus remains on tagging breeding cattle and replacement heifers since individual official identification is currently not required for interstate transport of beef feeder calves to most states. In addition, RFID readers for scanning tags are also available to practitioners at no cost, contingent on continued availability of federal funding. To order tags or readers, practitioners may contact the Office of Veterinary Services.

Accredited veterinarians are required to keep records of all official identification devices distributed to clients for 5 years, including the recipient's name, address and the tag numbers distributed or applied to livestock.

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# THEILERIA INCLUDED IN USDA LIVESTOCK INDEMNITY PROGRAM

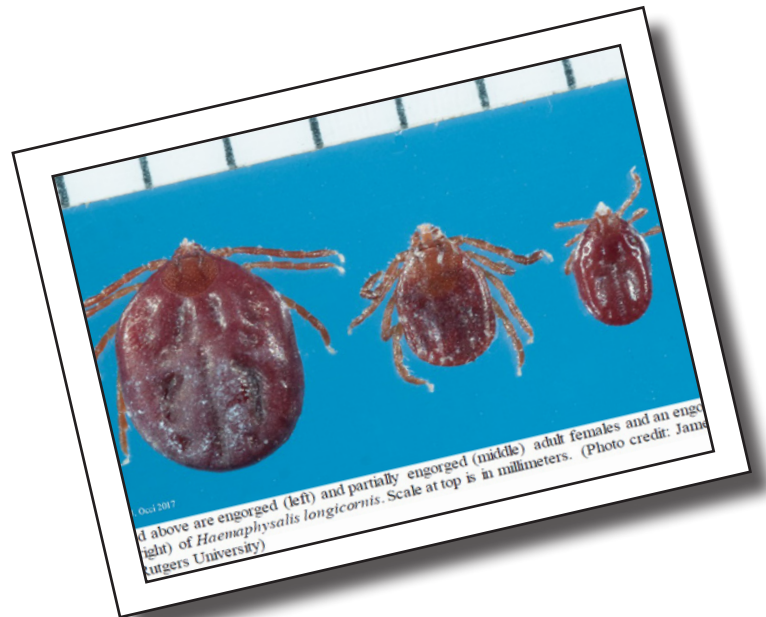
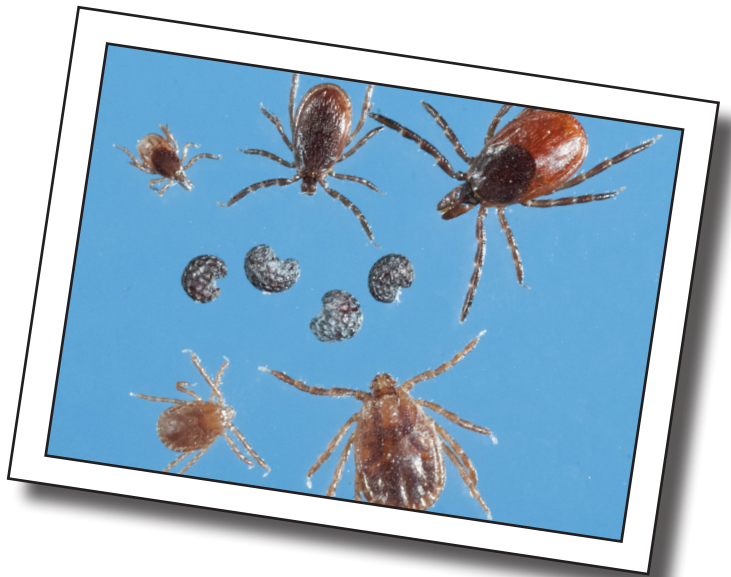
The prevalence and losses due to the Asian Longhorned Tick and *Theileria* have continued to spread and increase. The United States Department of Agriculture has recognized this and has authorized *Theileriosis* to be included on the list of diseases eligible for their Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP).

*The United States Department of Agriculture has recognized and authorized Theileriosis on the list of diseases eligible for their Livestock Indemnity Program.*

LIP is administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA). The occurrence of an eligible loss condition in and by itself does not determine eligibility for livestock losses. The livestock owner or contract grower must provide evidence acceptable to FSA that the eligible cause of loss not only occurred but directly caused loss or death. In addition, eligible disease is a disease caused and/or transmitted by vectors and vaccination or acceptable management practices that are not available, whether or not they were implemented, that directly result in death of eligible livestock in excess of a normal mortality.

Your local FSA officer can help you determine eligibility. Information such as beginning and ending animal inventory, veterinary certification, laboratory diagnostics, pregnancy check results, and purchase/sales receipts are some of the information to help secure indemnity.

The inclusion of *Theileriosis* in the LIP is relatively new and many FSA offices are just learning about the Asian Longhorned Tick and *Theileria*. For more information and specific eligibility requirements, contact your local FSA office. To locate your local FSA office <https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/service-center-locator>.



# OFFICE OF LABORATORY SERVICES UPDATE



The Office of Laboratory Services is dedicated to maintaining the most up to date fee schedule. The fee schedule includes locations for testing, up to date pricing, and preferred specimen type.



Virginia Regional Animal Health Laboratories are proud to be recognized as a “satellite laboratory system” as part of the American Association of Laboratory Accreditation. This means that the VDACS’ laboratories, for the first time, are considered a system for external audit body purposes. While this primarily focuses on our quality, it allows us to better develop the VDACS laboratories.

The VDACS-FDA Central Dairy Laboratory has moved from the Wytheville Regional Animal Health Laboratory to the Harrisonburg Regional Animal Health Laboratory. The system’s two Laboratory Evaluation Officers (LEOs) who are responsible for training and auditing private dairy testing labs, are now located in the Harrisonburg Laboratory. This move centralizes the subject matter expertise and facilitates regulatory test compliance.

Ruminant abortion and bovine respiratory PCR panels are up and running in the Lynchburg Laboratory. Samples for these tests range from fluid to swabs to tissue. We are excited to offer this

new diagnostic platform for antemortem testing. Please contact the Lynchburg Laboratory at **434.200.9988** if you have questions.

VDACS staff created a necropsy kit to assist and guide veterinarians performing field necropsies. This kit has been very successful, and we hope to improve it with your feedback. The kit includes specimen collection containers, formula cups, ice packs, a cooler, and a specially designed necropsy “mat,” to match specimen types to size needed in corresponding photos.

We are always open to ideas for testing to further assist the agricultural community. Through our partnership with the Virginia Tech Animal Laboratory Services Laboratory, we continue to evaluate ways to collaborate and expand testing services. Whether by utilizing data for reports or enhancing testing capabilities, we look forward to continuing to work together and with all of you.

*Virginia Regional Animal Health Labs are proud to be part of a newly recognized “satellite laboratory system” as part of the American Association of Laboratory Accreditation*



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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

For general questions or communication, please email us at [vastatevet@vdacs.virginia.gov](mailto:vastatevet@vdacs.virginia.gov), or feel free to contact any of our staff members below:

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**Dr. Tom Lavelle, Wytheville Regional Supervisor**  
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