

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
COMMERCE
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

December 17, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

I write regarding the ongoing outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), which continues to devastate the nation's poultry flocks, disrupting agricultural markets and straining household budgets. Nearly four years into this outbreak, farmers are still absorbing massive losses. The Administration acknowledged the need for a new approach earlier this year in the USDA's Five-Pronged Approach to Address Avian Flu. It is imperative that you follow through with a targeted vaccination policy paired with decisive action to eliminate trade barriers and retain global markets for American farmers. These next steps must come with robust agency coordination with the agriculture industry and public health stakeholders.

Despite extensive and costly mitigation efforts, outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza have occurred in all 50 states since 2022, resulting in the loss of over 165 million birds. The ongoing spread is on track to quadruple previous records from the 2014-2015 outbreak, which impacted 50 million birds but contained the outbreak in just seven months. Since September, nearly 9.5 million new cases have been reported nationwide, including over 3.5 million cases on Wisconsin farms.

Wisconsin reported its first confirmed case of HPAI in dairy cattle last week. This detection occurred in a closed dairy herd with established biosecurity protocols and no known epidemiological links to other affected cattle, further stressing the need to address the spread of HPAI from wild birds. Migrating birds continue to carry the infection to both domestic poultry flocks and dairy cattle, making clear that existing containment strategies are insufficient. Simply put, the Administration must do more to mitigate the outbreak of avian flu.

The outbreak is also hurting American consumers when they can least afford it. Supply shocks to egg markets driven by repeated outbreaks are increasing grocery costs across the country. This year, egg prices peaked at approximately \$6 per dozen, nearly three times the typical average price. Without a meaningful adjustment in the Administration's public health response, recurring outbreaks will continue to fuel food price volatility and erode consumer confidence.

Traditional methods for addressing the ongoing highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreaks have failed to stop the spread of this virus. The Administration must move forward with finalizing and implementing a national avian influenza vaccination program, as included in USDA's Five-Pronged Approach from February 2025. Vaccination must be coupled with sustained investments in surveillance infrastructure, sufficient staffing, and laboratory capacity within the National Animal Health Laboratory Network to ensure rapid detection and response to outbreaks before they spread.

Since the outbreak began in 2022, I have pressed the Biden and Trump Administrations to address risks posed by highly pathogenic avian influenza. I again call on the Trump Administration to follow through on its commitment to a national avian influenza vaccination policy while working with the agricultural industry and public health stakeholders to eliminate trade barriers. American farmers and consumers need a response that matches the scale and urgency of this outbreak.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator