

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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

February 14, 2025

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write regarding the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreak that is devastating our nation's poultry flocks and dairy herds. The outbreak is putting a strain on the livelihoods of American farmers and driving up prices for consumers. I ask that you task your Administration with creating and announcing a plan to contain the virus through robust agency engagement and coordination with stakeholders.

In the last 30 days, 22.43 million birds, including 153 total poultry flocks, have been affected by avian flu. Last week, the average wholesale price for large, white shell eggs reached \$8 a dozen, a 218 percent increase from the \$2.51 average consumers were paying in December 2023. The number of avian flu detections, and increases in egg prices, are far surpassing previous records and will not slow down anytime soon unless your Administration commits to a robust response.

In the first few weeks of your Administration, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) refused to provide updated information to the public on HPAI. For the first time in decades, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) failed to publish the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), including data on the HPAI outbreak, due to the pause on all public health communications. While I am relieved that the CDC has now resumed releasing the reports, I am alarmed by the message your Administration is sending to the public: that avian flu is not a priority.

The HPAI MMWR released this week suggests that the disease is capable of spreading undetected to humans, and that it is more prevalent than we previously understood. Now is not the time to delay federal guidance and funding for research, biosecurity, and testing, yet I am hearing directly from Wisconsinites concerned about their access to federal resources. Farmers, veterinarians, food processors, and local health officials are seeking federal leadership on the outbreak, and I request that your Administration execute a plan that includes these stakeholders in the avian flu response.

Your Administration is responsible for ensuring that data and available resources reach stakeholders on the ground responding to the outbreak. When the CDC, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) coordinate with each other and their counterparts across the country, stakeholders working on the ground can make informed decisions. The CDC and USDA, specifically, should prioritize communicating and deploying resources to farmers, ranchers, and veterinarians to strengthen biosecurity measures that protect workers and livestock. Without these measures in place, we will not be able to contain the spread of the virus, further exacerbating the risk to our nation's farmers and driving up food costs.

The FDA must be an active partner in addressing the outbreak, including continuing research and publishing guidance on the HPAI outbreak. I hope your Administration will continue FDA funding for the Animal and Veterinary Innovation Center that is tasked with studying the virus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. FDA should also prioritize its duty to keep consumers safe by enforcing the current rigorous food safety protocols, including pasteurization of dairy and egg products. In doing so, your Administration will reduce the risk to the public's safety and safeguard their confidence in the nation's food supply.

Over the last few years, I pressed the Biden Administration to address the avian flu outbreak that began in early 2022. I weighed in with Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Beccera, and I plan to do the same with Secretary Kennedy and Secretary Rollins. Again, I request that your Administration prioritize its response to the HPAI outbreak, and I look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T".

Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator