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## INDIANA STATE BOARD OF ANIMAL HEALTH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Winter Preparation and Biosecurity for Poultry**

INDIANAPOLIS (24 November 2015)—With Indiana’s first taste of winter, poultry owners should take steps to keep their birds healthy and safe by protecting them from plunging temperatures and unwanted ailments.

#### **Winter Preparation**

“As the weather gets colder, chickens and other poultry are inclined to spend more time inside to keep warm. Providing birds with suitable shelter can help keep them healthier and more productive throughout the winter,” said Kyle Shipman DVM, a poultry veterinarian with the Indiana State Board of Animal Health.

Poultry owners should prepare coops for winter by: providing extra bedding such as straw, using heat lamps, and ensuring the shelter is as draft-free as possible. Cracking a door or window open can help regulate the coop’s ventilation throughout the winter months while preventing the buildup up of moisture and harmful ammonia.

“Birds tend to be less active in the winter with hens laying fewer eggs due to less daylight and colder temperatures. During this time, it is critical to monitor the birds for sudden changes in behavior and illness,” said Dr. Shipman. “Providing adequate nutrition, including a higher-energy feed in the winter, is recommended.”

To deter unwanted pests foraging for food, all feed should be kept in sealed containers. When temperatures get below freezing, use water containers that do not break when water inside freezes. Feed and water should be checked frequently.

#### **Disease Prevention**

“Biosecurity is the protection of animals and people from the introduction of infectious diseases through the implementation of preventative measures. Biosecurity practices should become a habit for every poultry owner,” said Dr. Shipman.

Poultry owners should take steps to prevent the introduction of disease into their flocks. Recent findings of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) across the country present a higher level of risk of disease to poultry flocks of all sizes. Wild birds are known to carry diseases that affect backyard poultry, making them ill. Protect poultry by minimizing or eliminating their contact with wild birds that are also seeking winter shelter.

New additions can also bring disease into a flock. They should be kept separate for at least 30 days and cared for last. Under a new state law, owners must keep records of new bird additions for 3 years. The

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records must include: name and address of buyer and seller, sale date, breed, sex, number of animals and reason for movement.

Owners should be aware of signs of disease that could devastate a flock. Any of the following signs should prompt a call to the **Healthy Bird Hotline at: 866-536-7593**.

- Sudden death without clinical signs
- Lack of energy and appetite
- Decreased egg production
- Soft-shelled or misshapen eggs
- Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, and hocks
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs
- Nasal discharge
- Coughing, sneezing
- Incoordination
- Diarrhea

This toll-free hotline will connect poultry owners with a state or federal veterinarian who can help determine if an illness needs more follow-up. More information about keeping small flocks healthy and how to keep records is available online at: [www.in.gov/boah/2721.htm](http://www.in.gov/boah/2721.htm).

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#### SIDEBAR:

##### **Biosecurity tips:**

- Restrict access to the flock by people, pets, wildlife, and rodents
- Keep poultry pens and housing clean
- Do not share birds or equipment with neighbors
- Keep new birds separate from the flock for 30 days to verify they are healthy
- Know the warning signs of infectious diseases

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