

State of Vermont

Senate Chamber



Montpelier, Vermont

Senate Resolution

Offered by Senators Hardy, Collamore, Heffernan, Major and Plunkett,

S.R. 14. Senate resolution relating to strongly urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to expedite the establishment and implementation of an avian influenza vaccine national reserve and distribution system for small-and medium-sized poultry farms.

Whereas, according to the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), there is an HPAI (highly pathogenic avian influenza) H5N1 virus present worldwide and outbreaks among U.S. domestic birds (including poultry) are continuing to occur, and

Whereas, as of April 9, 2025, the CDC reported that HPAI H5N1 had stricken 168,771,718 birds in commercial, hobbyist, and backyard poultry flocks in 1,680 outbreaks across the country, and

Whereas, the severity of this avian flu outbreak cannot be minimized, and

Whereas, to date, the CDC has assessed that HPAI H5N1 poses a low risk to humans, but nonetheless, one person has died, 70 cases have been reported, and the potential for additional human impact cannot be ignored, and

Whereas, APHIS has created a five-prong set of responses to the animal health crisis encompassing investment in gold-standard biosecurity measures for all U.S. poultry; increased relief to aid farmers and acceleration of repopulation; removal of unnecessary regulatory burdens on the chicken and egg industry to further innovation and reduce customer prices; the exploration of pathways toward vaccines, therapeutics, and other strategies for the protection of egg-laying chickens to reduce instances of depopulation; and the consideration of temporary import-export options to reduce costs and the evaluation of international best practices, and

Whereas, although these steps attempt to address aspects of the continuing presence of the HPAI H5N1 avian virus in the nation's poultry flocks, there must be a more comprehensive and direct measure to halt the spread and reduce, if not eliminate, the presence of the virus, and

Whereas, on February 14, 2025, the USDA issued a conditional license to Zoetis for an avian influenza vaccine, H5N2 Subtype, Killed Virus, intended for use in chickens, and

Whereas, although the approval is conditioned on the "demonstration of safety, purity, and reasonable expectation of efficacy based on serology data," the need for this vaccine is immediate, and

Whereas, this new Zoetis vaccine is an updated version of a vaccine originally issued in 2001 and 2002, when an avian influenza outbreak occurred in Southeast Asia, and

Whereas, in 2014 and 2015, during a prior avian flu outbreak, the federal government created a national avian flu vaccine stockpile, which, while not used, was ready for deployment, and

Whereas, the rapid federal distribution of COVID-19 vaccines demonstrates that, with the necessary planning, the complex logistics required for an accelerated national stockpiling/deployment of an avian flu vaccine is possible, and

Whereas, the continuing avian flu crisis and its impact on commercial, hobby, and backyard poultry flocks demands a decisive and prompt federal response, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate:

That the Senate of the State of Vermont strongly urges the USDA and the CDC to expedite the establishment and implementation of an avian influenza vaccine national reserve and distribution system for small- and medium-sized poultry farms, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of the Senate be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture; the Vermont Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets; the Acting Director of the CDC; and the Vermont Congressional Delegation.