

Diligence on Fences, Nets and Rodent Control Critical to Disease Prevention

Most folks in the gamebird business are aware that wild waterfowl are often carriers of avian influenza. Although much of the testing surrounding the outbreaks in Minnesota has yet to find a smoking gun in terms of a wild goose or a wild duck that tests positive, experience has shown the veterinary world that taking steps to keep wild birds away from your gamebirds is essential to preventing an AI outbreak on your farm.

Dr. David Frame, with Utah State University, recently told the NAGA Health Committee that wild waterfowl are still the most likely culprits to be involved in initial new outbreaks in unassociated geographic areas. He strongly advised our committee to spread the word to NAGA members about the importance of maintenance of nets, fencing and rodent control.

While a net will not prevent material from falling into pheasant pens, for instance. It will prevent wild ducks from landing in pens where your birds are maintained. Because avian influenza is spread through feces, this type of interaction must be prevented! Maintaining quality netting, therefore, is absolutely critical.

The same is true for fencing. What doesn't fly in can just as easily walk into your pens through gaps and holes that develop in fencing and gates over time. It is important to routinely inspect netting and fencing for problem areas, and equally important to follow up on those inspections with prompt repairs.

Of course, some critters, such as rodents, can gain access to pens regardless of quality pens and fences. A rat tracking infected fecal matter into your pens from nearby contaminated areas could just as easily bring an outbreak into your barns or pens. That is why good rodent control needs to be part of your plans as well.

These pointers are part of a much larger strategy to minimize the risk of an outbreak. Good disinfectant procedures; policies for clothing, shoes and vehicles; well-maintained fences and netting; and aggressive rodent control all work in tandem to lower the odds of a costly outbreak.