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# SENTINEL TRIBUNE

SERVING: WALNUT GROVE, WESTBROOK, CURRIE, STORDEN, DOVRAY AND REVERE AREAS

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WEDNESDAY

## Talking highly pathogenic Avian Influenza with the U of M

U of Minnesota

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), or bird flu, is an extremely contagious viral illness that affects both wild birds and livestock, such as chicken and turkeys. As HPAI cases continue to rise in the U.S., University of Minnesota School of Public Health Professor Jeff Bender shares his expertise on the disease.

**Q: Where does HPAI come from? Do wild birds infect domestic flocks?**

**Prof. Bender:** Highly pathogenic avian influenza viruses are found in aquatic birds. These aquatic birds often serve as reservoirs for the virus and do not become ill, but are sources of infection for domestic poultry, such as chickens and turkeys. This virus is called "highly" pathogenic (Pathogenic refers to an ability to cause disease) because of how easily it transmits to domestic birds.

**Q: Can HPAI infect humans? And if so, on what scale?**

**Prof. Bender:** Rarely. This often depends on the virus strain. At present, this particular strain has not caused human illness in the U.S., but state health departments are working with industry and agricultural officials to monitor workers and producers for any potential infections.

**Q: In 2015, producers had to cull (destroy) millions of birds to stop the spread of HPAI. If they have to do that with the current outbreak, how will that affect poultry prices and availability for**



School of Public Health Professor Jeff Bender is a veterinarian and director of the Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center (UMASH). He's an expert on infectious and zoonotic diseases, those transmitted between people and animals. (Photo/Submitted)

**consumers? What could be the economic effect of HPAI on poultry producers?**

**Prof. Bender:** In 2015, there was an impact on the availability of eggs, chicken and turkey products. That outbreak had, at least, a three-to-six month effect on supplies and income for producers. Controlling the HPAI virus often involves culling infected poultry, and the 2015 outbreak had

significant impacts on producers, but also on those workers and support staff who process poultry and eggs.

**Q: Having to kill flocks and lose substantial income can have a devastating effect on farmer and farm worker mental health. Can you talk about that problem and explain some ways to manage it that we may have learned from the 2015 out-**

**break and/or work UMASH has done?**

**Prof. Bender:** Outbreaks of avian flu can cause emotional and psychological stress. Mental health in this situation is a significant concern, not only for owners, but also the workers who depend on regular income. The stress also includes wondering if your flock will be affected and how you will control the outbreak. If infected, there are concerns about disposing of dead birds and the increased stigma from community members of working on infected farms.

One of the lessons from 2015 is understanding this impact; recognizing signs of stress and depression and providing broad support for producers, workers and rural communities. On the Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center (UMASH) website, we provide some simple reminders in multiple languages of how to recognize stress.

**Q: How is your work helping to mitigate future HPAI outbreaks?**

**Prof. Bender:** Biosecurity protocols are important to reduce the risk of infections. Many of our state and Extension partners are providing tools to support these efforts. At UMASH, we have assembled in one place regional materials for producers, workers, their families and clinicians.

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### CLUB NOTES

#### Mary & Martha's Pantry

Pantry (1110 11th St.) is open Mondays 1:30pm - 3:30pm. Volunteers will greet clients outside and then return their food needs out on a cart. Phone 507-537-1416 if you need special arrangements or have any questions; mailing address is Mary & Martha's Pantry, P.O. Box 71, Westbrook, MN 56183.

#### V.F.W. Auxiliary

Westbrook V.F.W. Auxiliary will meet Thursday, April 14, at 5:30 p.m.

#### Cottonwood County Animal Rescue

Meets the second Wednesday of each month at the Episcopal Church in Windom (453 10th St.), at 7:00 p.m. All county residents welcome.

#### The Compassionate Friends

Monthly meetings are on the second Monday evening each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Business, Arts & Recreation Center (BARC) building at 1012 5th Avenue, Windom. They are a non-profit self-help support source for families who have experienced the death of a child of any age from any cause, whether recently or some time ago.

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## Friends of Lake Shetek State Park to host Annual Spring Egg Hunt

The Friends of Lake Shetek State Park has again teamed up with the Currie Town and Country Boosters to host a Spring Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 16 at the Lake Shetek State Park Zuya Group Center.

Children (toddlers through 6<sup>th</sup> Grade) are invited to bring their baskets and enjoy the beautiful setting at the state park while searching for candy-filled eggs. More than 3500 eggs will be hidden throughout the picnic and camping areas of the park. The hunt will start at 1:00 pm with a sign-up for prizes at the Zuya Group Center and will continue until all the eggs are found. Make sure you come early.

Cookies and refreshments will be served at the Zuya Center and families are invited to stay afterwards

to enjoy spending a day at the park. The Easter Bunny may make an appearance to wish you a happy spring!

The Spring Egg Hunt is sponsored by the Friends of Lake Shetek State Park, Currie Town and Country Boosters and many other local businesses with special help from the Tracy Youth Wrestlers. It is free to the public; however, state park vehicle permits are required to enter the park. Daily permits can be purchased at the park office.

Lake Shetek State Park is located 14 miles northeast of Slayton or 13 miles south of Tracy. Access to the park is by County Road 38, north of Currie. For more information or to volunteer at the event, contact the park directly at (507) 763-3256 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. daily.



Donors in the process of giving blood in Walnut Grove. (Photo/Submitted)

## Walnut Grove Bloodmobile goal met

There were 27 donors for the Walnut Grove Bloodmobile. There were 2 Power Red procedures and 4 Power red products collected, as well as 17 whole blood products, adding up to 21 total products. There

were 4 deferred donors and one "quantity not sufficient" whole blood product. The Bloodmobile staff appreciates everyone who took part in the Walnut Grove Blood drive.

## Trumpeter Swans stop in area



TALCOT WILDLIFE AREA — This gaggle of white-faced geese took flight as the photographer approached the pond they were on. Several Swans remained to be photographed with out incident. (Photo/Tom Merchant)

