

Experts: U.S. poultry biosecurity is good

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Purdue University scientists say corporate control of food production might be a key component in preventing a U.S. outbreak of avian influenza.

Since nearly all commercial U.S. poultry production is company-managed, production processes are safer and more efficient, said Todd Applegate, Purdue extension poultry specialist.

While wild fowl carrying the influenza virus could enter the United States, Applegate said it's unlikely those birds could come in contact with commercially raised poultry.

"The typical company owns their own parent stock ... that lay the eggs that are then transferred to a company-owned hatchery," Applegate said. "Once a bird is hatched from the company-owned hatchery, it is usually transported to another contracted producer.

"At the end of the production period, the company comes and collects the birds from that farm and takes them to a processing facility that they own themselves."

Applegate says the U.S. poultry industry's overall biosecurity measures are tight, with visitors not allowed onto the farms and the transfer of equipment from one farm to another is limited.

The U.S. poultry industry's combined 2004 production value of broilers, eggs, turkeys and sales from chickens totaled \$28.9 billion.

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