

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 13, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Dr. Michael Watson
Administrator of APHIS
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
4700 River Rd.
Riverdale, MD 20737

Dear Secretary Rollins and Administrator Dr. Watson,

Avian Metapneumovirus (aMPV), also known as Turkey Rhinotracheitis, Avian Pneumovirus, and Swollen Head Syndrome, is a highly contagious respiratory infection that critically impacts poultry. This disease significantly weakens the immune system, leaving flocks vulnerable to secondary bacterial and viral infections, often resulting in flock morbidity rates approaching 100%.

Surveillance conducted in Minnesota from April 1 to June 30, 2024, revealed a drastic rise in positive aMPV cases among commercial poultry flocks, escalating from nearly 0% to 100% within a mere 90 days. Layer flocks have experienced a drop in egg production, falling below 10% of normal levels without returning to pre-infection standards¹. The impact of aMPV poses a serious threat to turkey flocks and has led to substantial production losses, creating supply chain disruptions within the industry.

We acknowledge and appreciate the USDA's ongoing efforts to manage the aMPV outbreak, particularly in exploring prevention and treatment options. Additionally, we recognize the work being conducted by the USDA Center for Veterinary Biologics (USDA-CVB) to facilitate the importation of a safe and effective modified live aMPV vaccine into the U.S.

Given the rapid spread of aMPV and its severe consequences for farm operations statewide, it is urgent to emphasize the critical need for indemnity support for affected producers while we await the distribution of the modified live vaccine. Unfortunately, producers are not eligible for payments through the USDA Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) or the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish (ELAP) Program. This exclusion has caused devastating consequences for the turkey industry, and we look forward to collaborating with the USDA to ensure growers have access to the resources they need to weather the effects of aMPV on their livelihoods.

As the largest turkey-producing state in the nation, Minnesota's turkey sector plays a vital role in the state's economy by supporting local food systems, creating jobs, and enhancing community well-being. However, the rapid transmission of aMPV poses a serious risk to these contributions and the long-term viability of Minnesota's turkey industry. Assistance from the USDA through indemnity programs is

¹ Key findings from the "Avian Metapneumovirus Surveillance" project were presented at the 2024 MTGA Summer Summit by Dr. Jill Nezworski. The project, conducted by the Minnesota Turkey Research and Promotion Council, revealed a dramatic rise in aMPV cases among Minnesota turkey growers.

essential for producers to recover until a proven, highly effective, and safe vaccine can be imported, as authorized by the USDA-CVB.

We appreciate the USDA's ongoing efforts to safeguard livestock producers and look forward to your agency's prompt attention to this urgent matter. Thank you for addressing this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Michelle Fischbach
Member of Congress



Tom Emmer
Member of Congress



Brad Finstad
Member of Congress



Pete Stauber
Member of Congress