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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Dr. Bob Gerlach, State of Alaska Veterinarian, (907) 375-8214

State Veterinarian to test poultry at Tanana Valley Fair
Bird owners are encouraged to take advantage of free testing to protect birds from infectious diseases

(Fairbanks, AK) Alaska's State Veterinarian is testing domestic poultry for infectious diseases at the upcoming Tanana Valley Fair (Aug 3-11). Animals are scheduled to arrive at the fair on Thursday, August 2, and Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) State Veterinarian Dr. Bob Gerlach will offer surveillance testing to owners and poultry producers free of charge from 12 PM to 8 PM.

Although Alaska has not had a positive case of H5 N1 Avian Flu, DEC is urging bird owners to continue to be vigilant. "Biosecurity measures are still the best way to protect your flock from infectious diseases like Avian Influenza and other contagious diseases. It's as simple as creating a barrier between your birds and wild birds that could be sources of infection," said Dr. Gerlach. "Alaska's fairs are excellent opportunities to learn about biosecurity and take advantage of this free service all at the same time." The samples that are collected will be tested at the State's Environmental Health Laboratory in Anchorage, with results expected within a week.

DEC has been testing birds for infectious diseases on a continuous basis for the last several years. DEC has tested over 800 samples from domestic and wild birds collected since January. Wild water fowl are being sampled by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). So far this year 92 live birds and 972 birds from subsistence hunters have been tested. Sampling Alaska's bird populations will continue throughout the year. Beginning in late July, ADF&G will collect about the same number of samples as last season at two bird-banding camps located in Minto Flats and the Mat-Su Valley.

Information about how to protect pet birds and flocks from infectious diseases like Avian Influenza will be available in the poultry exhibition area, and can also be obtained from University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension agents. DEC is also partnering with *Sani-Can of Fairbanks* to provide hand-washing stations for people to wash their hands after handling or visiting animals and before enjoying the varieties of food offered at this year's Tanana Valley Fair. Hand-washing is the most important thing people can do to prevent the spread of disease.

Poultry producers wishing free surveillance testing at their farm may make arrangements for a scheduled visit by contacting the Office of the State Veterinarian at (907) 375-8200 or by emailing bob.gerlach@alaska.gov Surveillance testing will be offered at the Agricultural Fairs in Palmer, Delta, Kenai, and Kodiak, as well.

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For more information visit the State of Alaska and USDA's avian flu websites at: www.avianflu.alaska.gov/ or www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome?navtype=SU&navid=AVIAN_INF_LUENZA

