



Defend the Flock Newsletter / Winter Edition 2020

Defend the Flock: Your Biosecurity Bulletin

TRAINING HIGHLIGHTS: *Defend the Flock:* Controlling Salmonella in Commercial Poultry through Biosecurity

USDA APHIS hosted a free webinar that provided commercial poultry producers practical recommendations for how to control and prevent Salmonella infections in their flocks through biosecurity practices.

The webinar featured APHIS Veterinary Services staff Dr. Taylor Gaines and Dr. Katy Burden and subject matter expert, Dr. Charles Hofacre, President of the Southern Poultry Research Group and Professor Emeritus at The University of Georgia.

You can listen to a replay of the webinar and see the follow-up Q&A at the [Defend the Flock](#) Resource Center, under the "Webinars" tab.

Q&A Vet for a Day: A Talk with Dr. Savannah Thomas

We asked Dr. Savannah Thomas, National Poultry Improvement Plan Compartmentalization Coordinator in USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Veterinary Services, what it's like to "Defend our Flocks."



1. You have been involved with poultry since childhood. Tell us about your first flock. *When I was around ten, my brother and I accompanied our father to a poultry auction for the first time. Our first chicken was a single Buff Orpington chick named Baby. Our parents encouraged us and our flock grew tremendously to include chickens, ducks, geese, guineas, pigeons, and turkeys.*

2. As a young poultry owner, were you involved with any agricultural groups? How did that experience influence your career path? *I was very active in Future*

Farmers of America (FFA) and was a member of the state-winning poultry judging team. During my senior year, the head of the poultry science department at the University of Georgia came and spoke to our FFA classes. He talked about the industry and opened my eyes to the many opportunities that existed within the world of poultry.

3. How did you become aware of the importance of biosecurity practices? *As children, we made the mistake of introducing a sick bird into our flock. Before long, many of our birds had swollen eyes, sneezing, and increased mortality. Due to the rapid spread and severity, medical intervention helped but was not enough to save our flock. After that, I researched and began implementing biosecurity practices. This greatly decreased the occurrence of disease and improved the overall quality of our birds.*

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Report Sick Birds

If you see signs of illness, take action right away!

Veterinarian
Cooperative Extension Office
State Veterinarian/Animal or Poultry Diagnostic Lab
USDA

Phone Number

866.536.7593





— SAVE THE DATE —

BIRD HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

February 22–26, 2021

New Defend the Flock webinar for backyard growers/enthusiasts and other resources

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and the Defend the Flock website for updates



The Defend the Flock calendar is back for 2021! Get yours, and make biosecurity an everyday practice all year round. To order, visit bit.ly/APHIS_publications and search for PA-2261.

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4. What led you to work with USDA/APHIS and the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP)? During undergrad and veterinary school at the University of Georgia, I focused my externships and internships on poultry medicine, one of which was with the NPIP. After graduation, I worked at Lavonia Animal Hospital, a mixed animal practice. I learned that the NPIP had an opening and was ecstatic to return to the poultry world.

5. How do your experiences working on farms and at a mixed animal veterinary practice influence your work with APHIS? During high school, I worked at a two house broiler breeder farm. My duties included assisting the flock supervisor and veterinarians during their visits. At Lavonia Animal Hospital, I experienced a different side of poultry medicine—backyard flocks. Most sick birds I saw were due to poor husbandry and biosecurity. Both experiences reinforced how prevention and biosecurity are among the most important aspects of flock management, whether large-scale commercial or small hobbyist.

6. What would you recommend to youth interested in raising their own poultry? First, start small. Most people think raising a flock is simple and don't realize all the responsibilities. Second, focus on good biosecurity. Most of us learn the hard way that good biosecurity practices are what's most important to keep flocks healthy and productive.



For more information about how to keep your flocks healthy, follow Defend the Flock on Facebook and Twitter and visit www.aphis.usda.gov/animalhealth/defendtheflock.

