

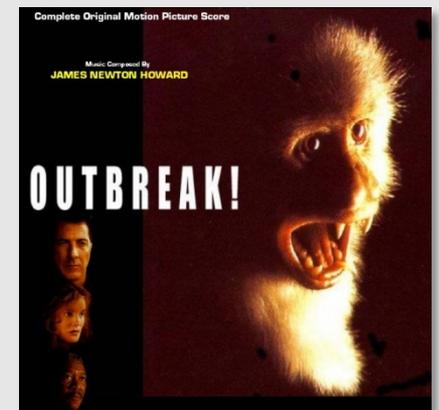
**10 THINGS TO  
CONSIDER WHEN  
WRITING OUTBREAK  
RESPONSE PLANS  
(& LESSONS LEARNED FROM  
HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN  
INFLUENZA)**

**Heather Allen,  
PhD MPA**

**Arizona  
Infectious  
Disease  
Conference  
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# INTRODUCTION

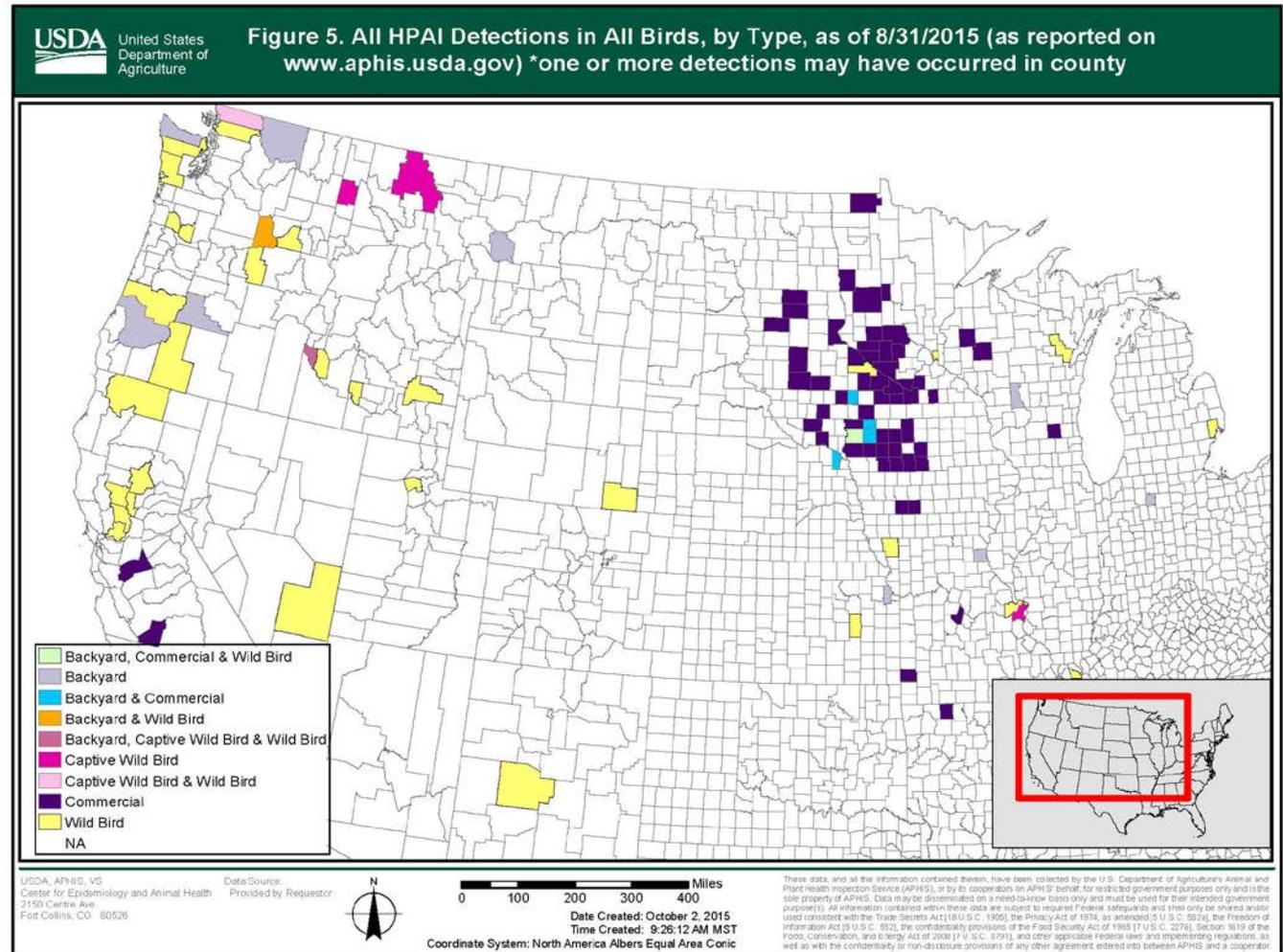
- Nothing breaks (or makes) a response plan like an outbreak.
- Exercises are useful, but real events are always better holistic tests of policies, procedures, and processes.
- No outbreak is alike...
- But many aspects of all outbreaks are the same.
  - Tools in toolbox/response activities.
  - Basic org structure/ICS.
  - Need for excellent internal and external communication.



# U.S. HPAI OUTBREAKS 2014-2015, 2016

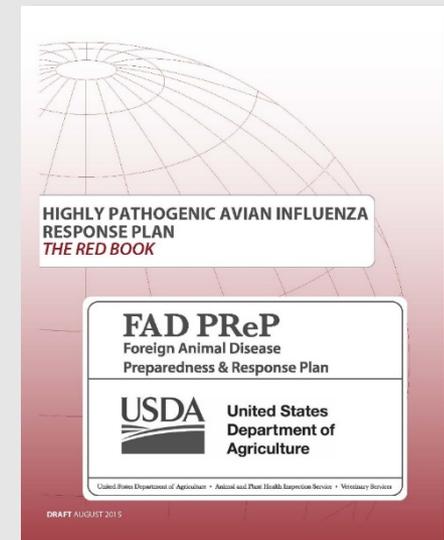
- **2014-2015:**  
**232 Infected Premises**  
(221 commercial, 21 backyard)
- **2016:** mixed LPAI/HPAI event (1 confirmed HPAI premises)

[www.aphis.usda.gov/fadprep](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/fadprep)



# HPAI RESPONSE PLAN: THE RED BOOK

- USDA APHIS published first version in August 2010.
- Revised in September 2011, September 2012.
- Between December 2014 and June 2015, the United States experienced the largest HPAI outbreak in U.S. history.
- Plan was revised in August 2015 based on lessons learned.
- Plan currently scheduled for another revision in Fall 2016.



# WRITING PROCESS

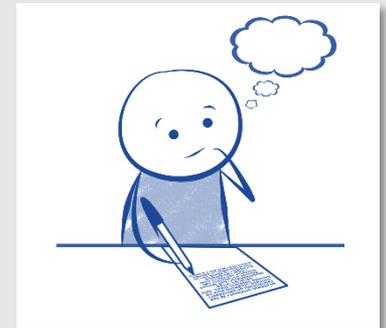
- Document drafted (may include sections by specific staffs or subject matter experts).
- Reviewed by Center Director.
- Sent to APHIS Veterinary Services for internal review.
- Sent to States and stakeholders for wider review.
- Document or draft document published.
- New versions: comments accepted from all stakeholders (internal and external) until next version published.

# PURPOSE & CONTENTS

- **Six chapters:**
  - introduction/disease agent,
  - framework for response/authorities,
  - specific incident management,
  - response strategy,
  - critical activities, and
  - recovery.
- **Strategic level guidance for APHIS VS and intended for all stakeholders' review and understanding.**
- **Stands alone, but lots of supporting documentation; e.g. SOPs and 'ready reference guides'.**

# #1. IT'S GOOD TO START A RESPONSE WITH *SOMETHING*

- Starting a response to an outbreak with zero on paper is not an ideal situation.
  - Difficult for responding agency.
  - Difficult for internal/external communication.
- Better to have straw men to knock down than a blank piece of paper:
  - Starts discussion.
  - Easier to comment on something than write.
  - May work after all!
- Don't be hesitant to actually write ideas down to get started.
  - Use what others have done.

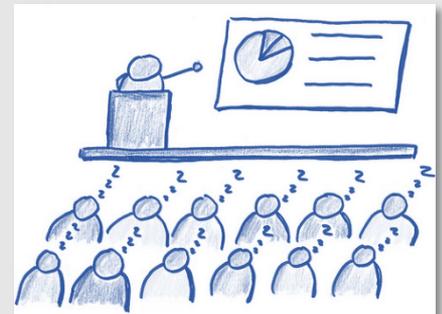


## #2. DON'T LET PERFECT BE THE ENEMY OF GOOD (AND USEFUL)

- You will NEVER prepare for every contingency.
- You will NEVER solve every problem before an outbreak.
- You will NEVER please everyone.
  - Use consensus.
- A perfect response plan is like a unicorn: really beautiful, doesn't exist.
- Letting 'the perfect' rule can:
  - Inhibit progress on writing response plans.
  - Result in the inability to finish or publish a draft plan.
  - Convolute and overcomplicate critical recommendations.

# #3. CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE

- Who is the primary audience for your document?
- Who will be the first person to pick it up in an outbreak?
- Who is likely not to ever read the document?
- Consider your language.
  - If at the strategic level, limit technical jargon.
- Consider your format.
  - Easy to read.
  - Figures are important.
  - Say it more than once.



# #4. DEVELOP SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- A strategic response plan is a component—can be the foundation, but other documentation is needed.
- Other strategic-level guidance may be needed.
  - Concept of operations more broadly.
- There are at least 25 established documents that support the content of the HPAI response plan.
- Tactical-level guidance may be necessary.
  - By activity.
  - By ICS section.
  - By ICS position.
  - Other?



# #5. KEEP IT ORGANIZED, EFFICIENT

- Consider a document hierarchy: concept of operations documents, disease response plans, guidelines, then standard operating procedures.
- Think more broadly about not only an emergency response plan, but an emergency response planning system.
- Many documents can be general, and work for a wide range of responses.
  - Don't duplicate material in lots of places.
  - Make it easy to update.
  - Use what already exists.



# #6. WELCOME FEEDBACK...

- Foster transparency in the plan and planning process.
  - Acknowledgment that others may have great input.
  - Additional credibility that others have reviewed the content.
- When reviewing feedback, remember the following:
  - Sometimes the person that disagrees the loudest doesn't have the strongest argument.
  - Getting a general sense of how the plan is received is very important.
  - Everyone has a different perspective and often competing interests.
- For every HPAI plan revision, we sent individual responses to all commenters, creating “buy-in” for/to the plan.

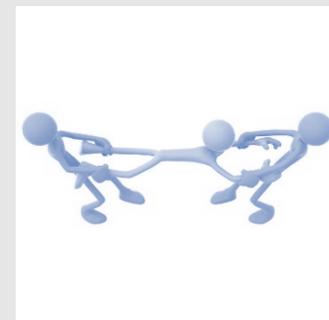


# #7. MAKE CHANGES WITH A REASON

- Each sentence/paragraph should have a clear reason for why it says what it does, in the way that it does.
- Is the problem related to the wording or to the intention/policy of the statement?
- Just because something worked well in the past doesn't mean that it shouldn't be changed:
  - Processes may need to be adapted.
  - Technologies change.
  - Improvements are always welcome.
- Just because something didn't work once doesn't mean it might not work again:
  - Focus on the why (why didn't it work)?
  - Every incident is different.
  - Is that experience generalizable?

# #8. BUILD IN FLEXIBILITY

- The HPAI Response Plan would never have survived first glance in the outbreaks without flexibility.
  - Defer to on-the-ground personnel for on-the-ground decisions (e.g., “relevant Local, State, Tribal, and Federal officials”).
  - Build in options and multiple ways of reaching the same goal; option can be selected based on the incident.
  - Create opportunity and accept the need to re-review things (e.g., case definitions) in an outbreak situation.
- Flexibility isn’t a “way out”, it’s a way to ensure the plan remains relevant even in a rapidly changing situation.



# #9. MAKE RESPONSE PLANNING DYNAMIC

- Think about work-arounds in an outbreak.
  - Unlikely that you want to update the entire response plan mid-incident.
  - For HPAI, “policy guidance documents” were issued and developed to flesh out concepts that were not detailed in the Red Book.
- Update both routinely and as-needed.
  - Schedule routine updates.
    - Comprehensive review of all material.
    - Incorporate lessons-learned from exercises.
    - Reach out to subject matter experts for updates.
  - Be ready to update if real incidents dictate (but hold).
- Always keep learning about best practices.
- HPAI pushed planning for other diseases forward significantly.



# #10. DISTRIBUTE THE PLAN WIDELY

- It's nice to have a plan...it's even better if people know it exists.
- Make it easy to access for the intended audience.
  - Before an outbreak.
  - Immediately after detection.
- If possible, make it publicly available on an easy-to-find webpage.
- Consider blast emails to ensure everyone has a copy.
- Consider specific communication to key parties on issues of shared concern.



# CONCLUSION

- **The HPAI Response Plan: The Red Book helped USDA APHIS mount a successful response to HPAI.**
- **Some changes were needed after the outbreak.**
- **General structure of the HPAI Response Plan: The Red Book worked well; unchanged.**
- **General structure preparedness and response planning worked well; unchanged.**
- **There are always going to be issues “on the ground”—a good response plan isn’t going to eliminate these (people squabble, equipment breaks, stuff happens); but, a plan can help stakeholders share goals, objectives, and direction.**



# QUESTIONS?

## Thank you!

