



April 27, 2022

Dr. Gwendy Reyes-Illg
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Dear Dr. Reyes-Illg:

Thank you for your online inquiry of April 8, 2022, asking about the recent use of ventilation shutdown plus heat (VSD+) in response to highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

We appreciate the opportunity to clarify our Agency's work to combat this devastating disease. During an HPAI outbreak, depopulating flocks within 24-48 hours is crucial. Scientific and epidemiologic studies show that conducting response activities within this window is critical to reduce the amount of virus in the environment, helping to protect nearby poultry operations from infection and limit the unnecessary loss of animals. The humane depopulation of infected birds—including acting quickly to minimize the amount of time that birds suffer the effects of the disease—is our primary goal.

Our preferred depopulation methods for poultry are water-based foam and carbon dioxide. However, in certain circumstances, these methods might not have the desired result nor result in a timely depopulation. In such instances, producers and state officials may determine VSD+ is the best option to stop virus amplification and widespread transmission. In some cases VSD+ could prove more effective and humane than a lengthier depopulation process.

While VSD+ carbon dioxide (VSD+CO₂) is a potential depopulation method, at this point, it is a theoretical but not yet practical option for U.S. producers. Protocols considering human safety and animal welfare have not been adequately developed and due to supply constraints, industrial volumes of CO₂ are not yet available in many parts of the country.

We hope this information was helpful. For more information, please visit the following web page to see more on USDA's HPAI response efforts:
<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza>.

Sincerely,

Rosemary B. Sifford
Deputy Administrator
Veterinary Services