A highly contagious strain of avian influenza, or “bird flu”, hit the United States this year, leading at least 11 states—including Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia—to ban all bird shows this summer where birds might co-mingle, such as county or state fairs, in the hopes of stopping the spread of the disease. As of late-May, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the highly pathogenic H5 virus has led to the deaths of more than 40 million birds in 15 states.

The USDA has reported H5 virus detections in 20 states. Fifteen states have reported outbreaks in domestic poultry or captive birds and 5 states have reported detections in wild birds only.

Although the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says the threat to humans is low, the economic impact of an outbreak can be significant both to producers and consumers. For example, according to Iowa Public Radio, the price of eggs used by food manufacturers has tripled in recent months - up from 64 cents in mid-April to $2.26 today. Iowa Farmer Today reports that the outbreak could cost the economies of Minnesota and Iowa alone nearly $1 billion.