

# RESTORING AMERICA'S EGG FARMS: REPOPULATION CAN TAKE UP TO A YEAR OR MORE



U.S. egg farms affected by highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), otherwise known as bird flu, are making progress to recover and get back to producing eggs—but repopulating more than 130 million laying hens takes time. The recovery of the egg supply follows an interdependent cycle, **which is overwhelmed and strained from start to finish due to the extensive losses**. New flocks are introduced in stages to ensure a balanced mix of hen ages nationwide—helping maintain a consistent supply of egg sizes to meet consumer and market needs.

Follow along this example timeline to see the many steps to recovery and repopulating an egg farm.



## DAY 1: HPAI DETECTED

Egg farmer reports unusual signs or possible presence of HPAI virus in the flock. Immediately, a veterinarian performs flock testing and if the birds test positive for HPAI, the farm is placed under quarantine, meaning no product may leave the farm.

The positive farm works with USDA to depopulate the birds within 24-48 hours because HPAI spreads quickly and is deadly to hens.



## MONTHS 1-2: FARM CLEANING & DISINFECTION

Cleaning and disinfection of the farm site begins to remove all traces of the virus from the barns, equipment and all affected areas of the farm.

After cleaning and disinfecting, the farm must remain empty for a minimum of 14 days.



## MONTHS 2-3: STATE & FEDERAL APPROVAL

USDA will collect and test environmental samples from the farm to confirm the virus has been eliminated. The state and USDA will confirm the farm is virus-free and approve the farm to restock. Certain states may have additional criteria to meet before granting approval.



## MONTHS 4-12+: REPOPULATING LAYER HEN FARM

Just prior to producing eggs, young hens are moved to the layer barns. New birds that are purchased for repopulation must test negative for HPAI before being moved onto the laying hen farm. One farm may have multiple flocks averaging 16-18 weeks of age up to 100 weeks of age housed in different barns. All birds in one barn are of the same age, are housed together as a flock, and do not move to other barns.

See [Barn Restocking Plan](#) to right for details about pullets.



## REPOPULATION CONTINUES

Egg farmers continue to follow the process of repopulating the farm with different ages of birds to ensure a consistent supply of eggs of the right sizes delivered to grocery stores and distributors daily.

**DUE TO HEAVY LOSSES AND EXTRAORDINARY NEED, HATCHING CHICKS AND PULLETS AREN'T ALWAYS AVAILABLE, WHICH CAN DELAY RESTOCKING.**

1

### BREEDER FARM



Hens at a breeder farm produce fertilized eggs. One breeder hen provides about 120 chicks, which then become laying hens.

2

### HATCHERY



Fertilized hatching eggs incubate for 21 days and then chicks hatch. Once the chicks are 1-2 days old, they are moved to a pullet farm. A pullet is a young hen that hasn't started its laying career.

3

### PULLET FARM



Hens are raised to approximately 16-18 weeks of age (called the pullet stage) before being moved to the laying hen farm to begin laying eggs. In most cases, pullets are raised in barns especially designed for birds of a young age. There is a limited number of pullet-growing facilities available, and farms sometimes house different ages of pullets to repopulate their flocks.

**Pullet flocks have also been affected by HPAI, therefore, pullet supply is also impacted, resulting in additional delays in repopulation.**

**Farms need a pipeline of hatching chicks and pullets available for restocking.**

**IT CAN TAKE MORE THAN A YEAR FOR AN EGG FARM TO RECOVER, RESTOCK AND RETURN TO FULL PRODUCTION.**