

Senator Santorum, Secretary Connor, distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Jim Adams and I am the President and COO of Wenger Feeds, an agribusiness based in western Lancaster County serving the Mid Atlantic region. Wenger's is a family owned and operated company that has grown to become one of the most comprehensive Agricultural Feed and Service companies on the East Coast. Our company is one of the only businesses in North America with three ISO certifications, a recognized international standard of excellence. We are certified in ISO 9001, 14001 and OHSAS 18001 for quality, safety, and the environment as a reflection of our commitment to continual improvement.

Biosecurity is a top priority for our company because it helps protect our customers from diseases which have the potential to cause significant economic loss to their business and the family farmers they work with. Wenger Feeds also owns and manages our own laying hens and have a vested interest in protecting and maintaining the health of our birds.

In the early 1980's, we experienced one of the most catastrophic events that agriculture had ever faced - the outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza. The poultry industry, in cooperation with the PA Department of Agriculture and our partner universities, has learned a great deal about biosecurity since then and we have been able to consistently handle these situations with more efficiency and less loss to producers.

In fact, the industry was credited with jump-starting the federal response by organizing bird owners, creating production location maps, and depopulating some of the earliest flocks at the owner's expense. We learned the hard and expensive lesson that timing is critical for controlling disease and missed days increase the risk of spread exponentially.

While our progress has been substantial, there are four areas though where I believe improvement could be made to provide a higher level of security. These areas are detection, indemnity, vaccination, and protection from anti-agriculture organizations.

The first area which has the potential for the greatest impact on biosecurity is detection of an outbreak. Whether the disease is introduced accidentally or intentionally, a rapid diagnosis is critical for controlling an outbreak. The longer a disease has the opportunity to smolder undetected, the higher probability becomes of additional farms becoming infected or worse that the disease will change into a more virulent form.

We need to have faster, more accurate results to determine the status of individual farms in order to control and eradicate threats. In the 1980's we could see where a few days of hesitation could allow the disease to spread to many of the neighboring farms.

Ideally, there would be a simple and reliable quick test that could be conducted and verified on site. The federal government should be investing in research at land grant institutions and universities who have tremendous academic knowledge as well as field experience to create the next generation of surveillance tests.

The second area for improvement is in indemnity for producers who participate in controlling and eradicating an outbreak. There is the potential for companies or producers to elect marketing of suspected flocks or animals rather than reporting them because of the potential for

significant economic loss due to a limited or slow indemnity program. A stronger, faster, and broader indemnity system would encourage submission and surveillance out in the field and help identify a potential outbreak before it happens.

A complement to a stronger indemnity program would be a federally subsidized business interruption insurance program specifically targeted to producers and family farmers for coverage in the event of a disease outbreak. This could be similar to other federal risk management programs where producers have a minimal cost for insurance to keep their farms operational during an outbreak.

A third area I would like to mention is the use of vaccination during a disease outbreak. Science has shown that vaccination is a very effective method for controlling and eradicating avian influenza and yet international markets tie our hands and do not allow us to use this important tool. There has been some progress with countries recognizing the validity of regionalization for export restrictions but we need to rely on science rather than politics in dealing with disease outbreaks.

Rapid controlled application is critical for vaccine to be used as an eradication tool but production of the necessary materials can take months to prepare. It would be prudent for the federal government to stockpile targeted strains of vaccine to be used in an emergency.

The final area I would like to mention to help guard animal agriculture from devastating diseases is protection from anti-agriculture organizations which have become much more aggressive in their rhetoric and tactics. Animal right groups such as Hugs for Puppies have recently invaded farms here in Pennsylvania with complete disregard to the biosecurity we work very hard to maintain on our farms. Stiffer penalties for domestic terrorist organizations and acts should be enacted to properly reflect the seriousness of breeches in biosecurity and become a deterrent for their activities.

Biosecurity is a very relevant issue for today's agriculture and I commend you convening this hearing to discuss concerns on how we can build even stronger protections for our industry and family farmers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and I look forward to answering any questions you would have.