

Stringent biosecurity required to contain bird flu outbreak

Fears that the bird flu epidemic might flare up again have emerged following reports last month of new cases on farms in the North West Province and amongst sea birds along the Western Cape Coastline.

By the end of 2017, following the culling of more than four million birds, the disease was thought to be largely under control. Containment efforts cost the poultry industry R 954 million.

Winter brings the renewed risk of the disease being spread by migrating wild birds, a factor which has prompted the South African Poultry Association (SAPA) to say that it is bracing itself for another outbreak. The organization recommends strict biosecurity and farm management protocols to help decrease the chance of disease on farms.

"Aside from isolation, traffic control, pest control and dead bird disposal, cleaning and disinfecting is a fundamental aspect of biosecurity in commercial poultry production," says Emma Corder, Country Manager of [Nilfisk South Africa](#).

"Farmers are advised to work closely with cleaning industry experts to ensure their hygiene standards adequately address risks."

According to the SAPA guidelines on the application of biosecurity on poultry farms, cleaning processes must ensure that workers that come into contact with birds must have clean hands and clothes, to mitigate against the potential for new contaminants being introduced from outside the immediate environment of the farm.

To avoid cross contamination, hands and boots should be disinfected regularly, before entering each new bird house. Equipment used inside the poultry houses should also be cleaned and disinfected prior to entering and after exiting the houses. Equipment should also never be shared between farms unless it has been thoroughly disinfected.

Modern cleaning technologies can effectively clean and disinfect facilities and environments on a farm.

"Producers need equipment to remove the H5N1 virus which is responsible for causing bird flu. The virus is spread through direct contact with infected birds and their droppings or bodily fluids. Nilfisk's MH series of hot water pressure washers can clean up to 210 bars at 90° Celsius and, when used with disinfectant, effectively neutralize these substances," says Corder.

She recommends equipment that is designed to work well in a farm environment, such as their range of industrial cleaners and sweepers.

"They are powerful, robust and manoeuvrable and can effectively clean and remove contagious particles that are often spread by the movement of workers or equipment on site."