

## Idaho to recommend waterfowl ban at county fairs

CALDWELL, Idaho (AP) — Ducks and geese may be missing from Idaho's county fairs as state officials are recommending a ban on waterfowl to fight the spread of bird flu.

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture plans to release a recommendation this week that fair boards prohibit showing ducks and other waterfowl. Such birds can be asymptomatic, meaning they can spread the disease while appearing healthy, the Idaho Press-Tribune reports (<http://bit.ly/1Gxd7AI>).

"It's going to be in the form of a recommendation, not a requirement," Idaho State Veterinarian Bill Barton said. "If a fair wants to allow it, that's their decision."

Officials are also recommending heightened bio-security for all birds at fairgrounds. There should be no sharing of food or food pans by exhibitors and no touching of birds by the public.

If the board decides to cancel any of its bird exhibits, the board will work to notify kids and come up with alternate presentation possibilities, said Canyon County Fair Administrator Rosalie Cope.

"We could let them set up education displays, just not their physical animals," Cope said. "It'd be a good lesson for them. It's sad, though."

Avian influenza is highly contagious and often deadly to domestic birds. Since the disease first appeared in the United States in late 2014, about 50 million birds have died or been euthanized, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In January avian influenza killed several birds in a Canyon County private falcon flock. State officials also euthanized all the chickens in a backyard poultry flock near Parma.

"The suspicion is that they were infected by waterfowl," Barton said. "(In) all three confirmed cases in Idaho, the most likely source of introduction was from wild migratory waterfowl."

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Information from: Idaho Press-Tribune, <http://www.idahopress.com>