



Utah  
**RAPID RESPONSE**  
Team  
Human and Animal Food

Official Newsletter of the Utah Rapid Response Team (URRT)



## Yearly Review

URRT highlights throughout 2022:

### 1st Quarter

**January:** The Utah Rapid Response Team (URRT) worked on multiple grant reports. The presentation session results from the National RRT Conference (that was held in December of 2022) came in during January. The session titled “Establishing Local Health Partnerships” was rated the highest among conference participants. The URRT and Indiana RRT presented during this session. The URRT submitted abstracts to 3 National Conferences for this year.



**February:** The URRT attended the Manufactured Food Regulatory Alliance Meeting and the FoodCORE Vision Meeting which allowed us for collaboration with many other partners. We also attended the Be Ready Expo where we provided information about foodborne illness, food safety, how to keep food safe, disaster and emergency situations. We also included several interactive components, including a food labeling exercise. The information at the booth that we provided to the public was very well received. We had well over 100 people stop by the booth who participated in the various activities that provided education and training on food safety.



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**March:** Utah had 15 virtual seats for an ER 310 Food Safety Issues in the Event of Disasters Course that was put on by the FDA. We were able to fill all the seats with representation throughout the state including state and local partnerships. The URRT also participated as a Facilitator for the AFDO Bootcamp.



## 2nd Quarter

### April:

**Food Safety Conference:** The URRT and the Food Safety Task Force sponsored the Food Safety Conference on April 12-14. This was the first year for a conference like this in Utah with 74 participants and many of them are excited to come back next year and invite their colleagues to join them. The conference had a pre-conference sampling training that included an interactive portion. Presentations covered all aspects of food safety including the food supply chain, recent outbreaks, recalls, resources, legislation, and more. There were also other interactive activities throughout the conference. There were 86 people in attendance at this conference. This conference brought together manufacturers, regulators, academia, industry, small businesses, and many other representatives in the food safety profession. We had an amazing planning committee which included Rick Beckstrand (UDAF), Travis Waller (UDAF), Thayne Mickelson (UDAF), Brooke Smith (UDAF Lab), Talisha Bacon (UDAF), Delaney Moore (UDHHS), Jeff Oaks (SLCo HD), Laura Koester (Harmons), Holly Miller (FDA), Karin Allen (USU), Anna Boynton (UDPS), and Liz Robles (In N Out).



**InFORM Conference:** The URRT presented on their thallium response in a presentation called “Thallium Detection in Beef” at the InFORM Conference. The presenters were Thayne Mickelson, Brandon Forysth, and Talisha Bacon.



**Avian Influenza Response:** The URRT assisted in the depopulation of 1.5 million chickens at a commercial egg laying facility and managed the incident command post. The URRT supplies that were used included a 16’x19.5’ tent, a supply trailer, a trailer for resting and recovery which doubles for hauling equipment, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) needed to initiate on-site support. The URRT had a 4 hour response time, and became a key factor in this response. The URRT was on site for 11 days and provided equipment and resources for 3 weeks. This outbreak had over 100 volunteers with 1,000 plus volunteer hours. The USDA representative on site noted the success of the coordinated command post and volunteer work.

4 hours  
response time  
11 days  
on site  
3 weeks  
of equipment  
100 plus  
volunteers  
1,000 plus  
volunteers hours



**May:** The URRT presented at the Emergency Operations Center meeting on the response of the Avian flu-commercial egg response. The URRT also attended the Utah Environmental Health Association conference that was held in Kanab, UT.



**June:**

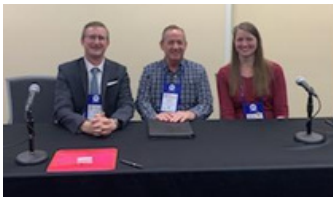
**Outbreak Response:** The Utah Rapid Response Team, Utah Department of Agriculture Food, Utah Department of Health and Human Services, and Salt Lake County Health Department teamed up and did an environmental assessment at an establishment that continued to have salmonella cases over a series of six months. Existing partnerships from previous URRT work enhanced collaboration during the environmental assessment and other outbreak activities, decreasing the time needed to respond to the incident.



**AFDO Conference:** The URRT presented at the 126th AFDO Annual Educational Conference in Glendale, Arizona. Talisha Bacon and Thayne Mickelson did a presentation called “Cow Hair: Thallium Detection in Beef” on the URRT response to the thallium incident. Rick Beckstrand did a presentation on dietary supplements called “Dietary Supplement Regulation & Enforcement”.



**NEHA Conference:** The URRT also presented at the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) Annual Education Conference as speakers in Spokane, Washington. Talisha Bacon and Thayne Mickelson along with Randy Tredwell from AFDO spoke on collaboration and partnership and the value of having a Rapid Response Team in your state; the presentation was titled “Collaboration During Foodborne Outbreaks for Human and Animal Food.”



**Steering Committee**

Talisha Bacon  
URRT Coordinator

Thayne Mickelson  
URRT Director

FDA

Holly Miller (Primary)  
Travis Jensen (Alternate)

LHD

Michelle Cooke

UDAF Manufactured Food  
Rick Beckstrand (Primary)

UDAF Animal and Feed  
Mark Ashcroft (Primary)  
Landen Kidd (Alternate)

UDAF Lab

Brandon Forsyth (Primary)  
Kathleen Thorsted  
(Alternate)

UDOH Epi.

Delaney Moore (Primary)  
Cindy Burnett (Alternate)

UDOH

Mark Jones (Primary)  
Willy Lanier (Primary)

UPHL

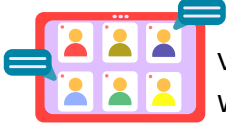
Kelly Oakeson (Primary)

USDA-FSIS

Keith Banta (Primary)

## Third Quarter

**July:** URRT members Talisha Bacon and Delaney Moore presented virtually at the NACCHO 360 conference on the URRT local health Department tour. They spoke on the value of a local health department tour and the partnerships it created. There were also a handful of URRT members who attended the NEARS virtual conference.



**August:** The URRT, along with the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food employees, who assisted in the response efforts for avian influenza, and the facility owner were invited to a recognition luncheon with Governor Spencer Cox. We were recognized for the work performed during this outbreak and stepping up during an extremely difficult time. The URRT was able to provide equipment for another highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) response.



The URRT summer retreat was held in Cache County. We were able to reconnect and network with many people we haven't seen in person since the COVID-19 pandemic. We had an amazing turnout with 16 attendees. We were able to meet new people, plan for the year, connect with others, and build relationships. Also, the URRT has officially started the mentor process with the Washington RRT as the mentee due to personnel changes.

**September:** We were able to finish our Local Health Department Tour! The URRT was able to help Dairy West at the Utah State Fair with their ice cream station.



The URRT, along with UDAF, UDHHS, and SLCoHD presented at the Utah Environmental Health Association (UEHA). The presentation was titled, "Multi Serotype *Salmonella* Outbreak in an International Grocery Store." Rick Beckstrand received the Pickett Webb award from the Utah Environmental Health Association.



## Subscribe

If you would like to receive the URRT Newsletter send an email to Talisha Bacon at [tbacon@utah.gov](mailto:tbacon@utah.gov).

## Fourth Quarter

**October:** The URRT, along with others from Utah, attended the 5 State-Regional Meeting that was held in Denver, CO. This meeting helps us connect with FDA leadership and to better understand the requirements of cooperative agreements and grants. We heard from the FDA Program Division Director, Mark Harris, and other HAFW4 leadership.



Each state was given time to provide updates. Utah is the only state with a Rapid Response Team within our region. We were able to showcase the work we have accomplished and to highlight our ability to work together with all our federal, state, and local health professionals.

We received training along with a Tabletop Exercise working on standards implementation. There were additional speakers highlighting regulatory updates and challenges on subjects such as dietary supplements, allergens, customer complaints, produce safety, and recalls. We also learned about other resources available to us to promote and administer food safety programs.

**November:** The URRT attended the Public Health in Disasters Conference. We started the initial planning for the 2023 Food Safety Conference, as well as preparation for the upcoming National RRT conference.

**December:** The URRT, along with members of the Steering Committee, attended the National Rapid Response Team Conference that was held in Long Beach, CA.

This conference brings all the Rapid Response Teams from the entire country together to share successes and learn from one another. We had really great representation from Utah, including representation from produce, plant, regulatory, and administrative departments from the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, state epidemiologist team, state public health lab, and from Salt Lake County Public Health Department.



We received hands-on training using High-Volume Water Sampling Equipment. This is equipment we are in the process of acquiring to add to our response resources. This is very technical equipment used for detecting harmful pathogens in water. Part of the group attended a tour of the International Mail facility, where products are received and shipped. Food safety was a big part of the inspection process highlighted.

Utah had the opportunity to highlight our response to the avian influenza outbreak and how we are prepared to respond. Kelly Oakeson from the Utah Public Health Lab presented on whole genome sequencing. His efforts are leading the nation in pathogens and their precise genetic fingerprint.

## How Ready Are You? Responding to the Avian Influenza.

Talisha Bacon, MPH, LEHS and Thayne Mickelson MS  
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food

### Background of Avian Influenza

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) (A/H5N1) virus occurs mainly in birds, is highly contagious among birds, and can be deadly, especially in domestic poultry.<sup>1</sup> Signs of HPAI in poultry include high death loss among flocks, nasal discharge, decreased appetite or water consumption, and lack of coordination.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, though historical strains have been shown to be able to transmit to humans and cause severe illness, the recent HPAI detections do not present an immediate public health concern.

In the Spring of 2022, Utah reported cases of HPAI. As of November 2022 there were approximately 2 domestic million birds that were lost to HPAI. HPAI is not unique to Utah; it is spreading throughout North America, Asia, Africa, and Europe. Figure 1 shows the latest date regarding HPAI in Utah, and Table 1 shows the breakdown of each county affected by HPAI. Wild birds in Utah have also tested positive for HPAI. As of Aug. 30, 44 birds have tested positive for avian flu in various areas of Utah. The birds include Canada geese, great horned owls, hawks, pelicans, turkey vultures and ducks. Two red tailed in Salt Lake County have also tested positive.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 1. A map of Utah showing the counties in which HPAI has been detected (shaded in red), and wild birds.

County	Bird Loss	Outbreaks
1. Garfield	1,000,000	7
2. Nevada	20	1
3. Salt Lake	500	1
4. Utah	7	1
5. Wasatch	481,000	15

Table 1. Counties in Utah in which HPAI has been detected in commercial, backyard, and wild birds. Risks, with bird loss and outbreak numbers.

### Mission Ready Rapid Response

The URRT is equipped with a mobile response unit that has the capacity to respond rapidly to human and animal food emergencies when needed. This was proven when we received a call requesting our response from the State Veterinarian to assist in an outbreak. The URRT was able to respond, including stand-up of the Incident Command Post, in four hours (Figure 2). This was a big task considering our home base office was two hours away in one direction. Prior responses prepared us for this situation. We know who was available, who would be able to drive the vehicles, and the equipment was already organized and ready to go. This allowed us to be mission ready and have a faster response.



Figure 2. This is a photo of the URRT incident command post responding to the HPAI outbreak.

The URRT assisted in the depopulation of 1.5 million chickens at a commercial egg laying facility and managed the incident command post. The URRT supplies that were used included a 10'x10' tent, a supply trailer, and a trailer for resting and recovery which doubles for hauling equipment, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) needed to initiate on-site support.

The tent is equipped with: temperature control, tables, chairs, floors, windows, locked doors, electricity, A/C heater, conference phone, lights, insulation, able to withstand 85 mph wind, and more.

The URRT was onsite for 11 days of the response, during which time there were over 100 volunteers that assisted in the depopulation process. In addition, the URRT supported the response by leaving our equipment on site for an additional three weeks with minimal staff.

Incidents will happen in all kinds of weather. Having the proper equipment is vital to a response. During this response we experienced heavy rain and snow, wind, heat and cold weather, sometimes those were all on the same day. The weather changed consistently, however, having the proper equipment allowed for continuity of operations. Another thing to note about weather conditions is making sure you have equipment that is being stored and maintained as is not disrupt the flow of the operation. With so much change in the weather human safety was of the utmost importance and was monitored.

### Incident Command

One aspect of incident command is Just in Time Training (JITT). JITT allows for training that is essential to know while responding to an incident. JITT increases the confidence of those responding to an outbreak by ensuring that everyone knows the operations and how to carry them out, and who is in charge of each process. JITT allows for smoother responses and easier communication. JITT also covers aspects of safety of equipment, supplies, and those who are responding. Many volunteers were not familiar with the aspects of depopulation procedures and JITT helped ensure understanding and safety.

During our JTT we trained with over 100 volunteers. JITT training included:

- The clean and dirty lines (hot and cold zones)
- How to properly don (put on) and doff (take off) your PPE (Figure 3)
- Signage in and out
- Understanding of tasks and separation of duties
- Understanding impact of HPAI and the responsibility of each person
- Monitoring of work times
- Needed breaks
- Keeping hydrated
- Various tasks that did not include assisting with depopulation
- LHD monitoring of symptoms

We also had a person in charge of PPE. The Safety Officer would ensure that the volunteers were donning their PPE and, controlling people when PPE was not put on correctly to ensure everyone's safety.

The URRT approach to Incident Command is a unified command. This being said there are many different agencies with response duties. We were able to come in and support with IC post duties, allowing USDA and UDM to focus on the avian flu outbreak. Supplies were handed out by staff that were not exposed in any way during the response. The tent was used as the secure place for no contamination. We clearly defined three areas of incident management control, which were:

- Incident Command Post
  - Tent and equipment
  - Daily situational meetings
  - Food and Water
  - Sign in/out
  - Supplies and storage
  - Isolated supplies
- Cold Zone
  - A place to take a break and eat
  - Receive instructions for the day
  - Apply Personal Protective Equipment
- Hot Zone
  - Removal of PPE
  - Human decontamination zone
  - All vehicles and equipment coming in and out are sanitized
  - Separation of contaminated and non-contaminated



Figure 3. This photo shows the lines which represented the clean and dirty lines for our incident command as well as the PPE that was used during the response of HPAI.

### Partnership and Collaboration

A successful response relies on partnership and collaboration. During this response we worked with the Local Health Department, who conducted surveillance on the volunteers, provided posters and fliers regarding safety and health information in regards to the Avian flu. We also worked with the County EM and Law Enforcement, County Environmental Health, USDA, UDM, FHO, Veterinarians, Owner of facility and workers, Veterinarians and UDMHS. All of these agencies and individuals played a critical role in responding to the outbreak.

The elements that made this recovery so successful were committed resources, preparation, training, and organized volunteers, and coordination with involved partnerships.

### Recovery Process

The speed of recovery is impacted by how the response is handled. The URRT was able to have a fast response (Figure 4), which allowed the management of the facility to focus on depopulation and not to lose momentum in responding to this outbreak. Having supplies and equipment on site allowed for depopulation efforts to begin immediately. The event later said with the quick response they were able to restart production three months sooner than expected. The USDA emergency coordinator commented that "The USDA representative on site said I have never been to a response where there were so many volunteers and a coordinated command post."



Figure 4. This infographic depicts the highlights of the URRT response of the HPAI outbreak.

### After Action Review

With the URRT we held an After Action Review (AAR) for the HPAI response process. During our AAR the things that went well were having food and water available, being adaptable for all types of weather, and adhering to safety protocols. Some things that did not go well were not having a wide variety of Tyvek suits, and not having the proper types of gloves. These two items were later resolved by the supplies the USDA offered.

Another item that was identified during the AAR was understanding the difference between clean and dirty lines. Additional training of volunteers was provided and the issue was resolved. One key component to this response was how fast the URRT was able to respond and set up. USDA also had incident command staff on-site, and was a valuable partner to assist in the response.

### Conclusion and Acknowledgments

After the URRT deactivated their equipment from the response we decontaminated the tent, trailers, and equipment. We took the supplies to a neutral location where we were able to clean and re-supply.

In conclusion, the preparation of the URRT became a key factor in this response. Another positive aspect of this response was a willingness of volunteers and the opportunity to work side by side with various agencies. With everyone involved, it is estimated that over 1,000 volunteer hours went into this response.

The URRT along with the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food employees who helped with the response efforts were invited to a recognition luncheon (Figure 5) with Governor Spencer Cox, as well as the owners of the facility. We were recognized for the work performed during the outbreak and stepping up during an extremely difficult time.



Figure 5. In August of 2022, Governor Cox hosted UDMF employees involved in the HPAI outbreak luncheon at the Governor's Mansion for a thank you lunch for their hard work and going above and beyond the call of duty to help with the outbreak.

### References

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/index.htm>
2. <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal/health/avian-flu>
3. Figure 1. Table 1. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/data-map-commercial.html>

Thank you to everyone who has allowed the URRT to come and do training throughout the year and to those that have helped us respond to incidents, and outbreaks. The Steering committee along with many others have helped build this program to make it so successful. We would not be where we are today without the help and support from those in and out of the State of Utah. Thank you for your support.



## 2022 URRT Steering Committee Accomplishments

- Activations
  - Avian Flu Outbreaks
  - International Grocery Store
- Committees
  - Disaster Discovery Center Board
  - High Volume/ DEUF Sampling Water workgroup
  - National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) Preparedness Committee
  - National RRT Manual Revision
  - National RRT Conference Planning Committee
  - Partners With A Common Purpose (PwCP) Steering Committee
  - Public Health Preparedness Health Advisory Committee
  - Regional Resiliency Assessment Program (RRAP)
  - State Emergency Operations Center ESF 11
  - Utah Feeding Task Force
- Conferences
  - FoodCORE Vision Meeting, Virtual
  - Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Alliance (MFRPA) Meeting, Virtual
  - PulseNET- Virtual
  - AFDO- Glendale, AZ
  - National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) Conference- Spokane,WA
  - NEARS Conference - Virtual
  - Utah Environmental Health Association (UEHA) - Kanab, UT and Ogden ,UT
  - NACCHO 360 - Virtual
  - Office Of Human and Animal Food -Division IV West Five-State Meeting- Denver, CO
  - RRT Return of the Team - Long Beach,CA
- Regularly Scheduled Meetings
  - EOC Monthly Training
  - FoodCORE Meetings
  - Food Safety Conference Planning Committee Meetings
  - Food Safety Task Force Meetings
  - National Coalition of Food Protection Task Force Meetings
  - National Environmental Assessment Reporting System (NEARS) Quarterly Calls
  - Utah Feed Task Force
  - Utah Rapid Response Team (URRT) Steering Committee
- Presentations
  - “Thallium Detection in Beef” by Talisha Bacon, Thayne Mickelson, and Brandon Forysth- InFORM Conference
  - “ Avian Response” by Thayne Mickelson - Utah Emergency Operations Center
  - “Cow Hair: Thallium Detection in Beef” by Talisha Bacon and Thayne Mickelson- AFDO Educational Conference
  - “Dietary Supplement Regulation & Enforcement” by Rick Beckstrand - AFDO Educational Conference
  - “Collaboration During Foodborne Outbreaks for Human and Animal Food” by Talisha Bacon, Thayne Mickelson, and Randy Tredwell - NEHA Annual Education Conference
  - “Local Health Department Tour” by Talisha Bacon and Delaney Moore- NACCHO 360 Conference
  - “Multi Serotype Salmonella Outbreak in an International Grocery Store” - Talisha Bacon, Andrea Gamble, Delaney Moore, Jessica Schmiemann, and Stu Strock - Utah Environmental Health Association (UEHA)
  - “Whole Genome Sequencing Updates” by Dr.Kelly Oakeson- RRT Conference
- Programs the URRT Manages
  - Food Safety Task Force
  - NEARSd
  - Recalls
- Reports
  - Capability Assessment Tool (CAT) report
  - End of year report
  - Food Safety Task Force grant
  - Grant reports
  - In-kind contribution report
  - Mid-year report
- Trainings attended by the URRT
  - Public Health in Disasters Conference
  - RRT National Conference
    - URRT Poster
- Trainings put on by the URRT
  - ER 310 Food Safety Issues in the Event of a Disaster - Virtual
  - Food Safety Conference - Lehi, UT
  - Foodborne Illness Booth - Be Ready Expo
  - Local Health Department Tour - Statewide
  - Sampling Training - Lehi, UT

## 2022 Awards and Recognition

- The URRT along with employees of the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food received recognition from Utah's State Governor for the work they did in response to the Avian Flu outbreak.
- Rick Beckstrand received the Picket Webb award from the Utah Environmental Health Association.

## 2023 Upcoming Events

- FoodCORE Project Meeting- every 2nd Thursday@ 11am
- RRT Calls- every 4th Thursday @ 12:00pm
- URRT Steering Committee Meeting- every 4th Thursday @ 1pm
- Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Alliance (MFRPA) Meeting- February 8-12 Virtual
- Food Safety Task Force Meeting- April 13, August 10, November 9
- Food Safety Conference hosted by Food Safety Task Force- April 12-15 @ Thanksgiving Point
- InFORM Conference- April 22-26, Virtual
- Utah Environmental Health Association - May 4-6 @ Kanab, UT
- AFDO Annual Education Conference - June 13-17 @ AZ
- National Environmental Health Association Conference - June 28- July 1st @ Spokane, WA and virtual
- NACCHO 360- July 19-21 @ Atlanta, Georgia

## Save the Date

Utah Food Safety Task Force is hosting a



April 11-12, 2023 Thanksgiving Point