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**VIDEO: Hickman's Bird Flu Outbreak Could Cost Taxpayers More than \$38 Million, Says Animal Group**

*Recent USDA policy change doubles compensation rates as 2.3 million birds killed at Arizona egg factory*

**May 26, 2025 - Phoenix, AZ** – Animal Outlook, a national animal protection nonprofit, reveals that taxpayers could be forced to cover approximately \$38 million in insurance payouts following the latest bird flu outbreak at Hickman's Family Farms on May 19, where 2.3 million chickens were killed.

The outbreak at one of the Southwest's largest egg producers highlights the mounting costs of industrial animal agriculture to public health, animal welfare, and taxpayers. Following a recent USDA policy change that increased compensation from \$7 to nearly \$17 per bird, the massive die-off at Hickman's facilities could result in millions in federal payments.

"This devastating outbreak at Hickman's represents everything wrong with industrial animal agriculture," said Ben Williamson, Executive Director of Animal Outlook. "Not only are millions of animals suffering in crowded, disease-prone conditions, but taxpayers are essentially subsidizing this broken system through increased federal indemnity payments. The industrial farming model of cramming millions of birds into confined spaces creates perfect conditions for disease outbreaks. It's time to seriously question why taxpayers are continuing to prop up this unsustainable system."

Animal Outlook obtained footage of depopulation efforts at Hickman's facility in Tonopah, including wheel loaders pouring piles of dead birds into dump trucks, while workers walked around seemingly without appropriate personal protective equipment covering their eyes, face, and mouth.

The most commonly used method of mass-killing egg layer flocks is Ventilation Shutdown Plus – where birds are essentially baked alive and suffocated by sealing off barns, shutting down ventilation, and adding heat, causing a prolonged and painful death that can take hours. A previous Animal Outlook investigation documented the suffering caused to birds in Ventilation Shutdown Plus [experiments at North Carolina State University](#).

"This is a system where corporations are rewarded for the high risk business model of producing protein via intensively confined animals—then handed millions when those conditions inevitably

result in disease outbreaks,” said veterinarian Crystal Heath, and executive director of the veterinary advocacy organization Our Honor. “These mass exterminations aren’t just animal tragedies—they’re public policy failures. We’re rewarding industrial cruelty with taxpayer money.”

This past week’s outbreak is the third instance of bird flu at a Hickman’s facility in less than a year. In November 2024 an outbreak of bird flu at the company’s Maricopa facility cost the lives of 800,000 birds, and in January of this year a further 300,000 birds were killed at the same facility.

These outbreaks at Hickman's are part of a larger bird flu crisis that has so far resulted in the deaths of 172 million birds nationwide. The company, which operates facilities across Arizona, Colorado, and California, has previously faced multiple lawsuits regarding air pollution violations, inmate worker injuries, and nuisance complaints from neighboring communities. Their use of prison labor through Arizona Correctional Industries raises additional ethical concerns.

For more information about Animal Outlook's investigation into Hickman's Family Farms and the broader implications of industrial animal agriculture, visit [website].

For video of depopulation activities at Hickman’s Egg Farm, visit <https://youtu.be/XBBh2sZ966o>.

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## **ABOUT ANIMAL OUTLOOK**

[Animal Outlook](https://animaloutlook.org/) is a national nonprofit 501(c)(3) animal advocacy organization. It is strategically challenging animal agribusiness through undercover investigations, legal advocacy, corporate and food system reform, and disseminating information about the many harms of animal agriculture, empowering everyone to choose vegan. <https://animaloutlook.org/>