

**September 25, 2018**

## **Newcastle Disease Update**

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) between May and September, 2018 confirmed the presence of virulent Newcastle disease in several backyard exhibition chicken and backyard hobby turkey flocks in California, USA. Recently, Newcastle disease virus has been confirmed in wild birds, specifically cormorants, in Ontario as well as other provinces. While the strain in wild cormorants is not typically significant for domestic poultry, it has been known to occasionally cause disease in domestic birds.

Newcastle disease is a highly contagious disease in many species of domestic poultry, exotic and wild birds. Birds become infected when they have direct contact with diseased or carrier birds. Infected birds may shed the virus in their feces, contaminating the environment. The virus can survive for days in litter, feed, water, soil, dead birds, eggs and feathers. The disease spreads rapidly among birds in close confinement. Newcastle disease can be brought into a barn by breaches in biosecurity, and it is most often transmitted from one infected flock to another by movement of infected birds or contaminated equipment or people.

Commercial breeder and layer chickens are routinely vaccinated and they have lower risk of infection. Birds with outdoor access have higher risk of contracting the disease, and they should not share areas with wild birds such as cormorants. Make sure areas with outdoor access do not attract wild birds as ponds or open feeders may become contaminated with wild bird droppings. As fall is migratory bird season and cormorants may be moving away from lakes, it is a good opportunity to review biosecurity for domestic poultry to minimize risk of transmission.

All commercial and small flock poultry farmers should monitor for their flocks for illness and deaths and track flock feed and water consumption. Watch for any clinical signs of disease, such as depression, diarrhea, decreased egg production, high number of sudden deaths in a flock, or respiratory distress.

**If you have any concerns regarding the health status of your flock, contact your veterinarian immediately.**

**Key steps** to reduce the risk of infection in your flock include:

- Ensure adequate training of farm and company personnel in biosecurity and disease prevention.
- All people entering poultry barns, including farmers, employees and service providers must put on clean footwear, protective clothing and follow all biosecurity protocols each time a barn is entered.
- Minimize visits to other poultry production sites and avoid any co-mingling of birds or contact with outside/wild birds.
- Avoid exchanging and sharing equipment with other poultry production sites or farms.
- Ensure all vehicles and farm equipment that access the barn vicinity are properly washed, disinfected and thoroughly dried before use.
- Ensure that laneways are restricted and secured.

- Prevent wild bird and rodent entry to poultry barns and related facilities.
- Ensure that bedding is free of contaminants (feces from wild animals, etc)

Additional information is available at:

<http://phrn.net/newcastle-disease-factsheet/>