

September 1, 2018

## Virulent Newcastle Disease Update and Biosecurity Advisory

All poultry owners in California:

Virulent Newcastle disease was confirmed in backyard exhibition birds on May 17, 2018 in southern California triggering a joint United States Department of Agriculture and California Department of Food and Agriculture emergency response. This virus, which is normally not found in the United States, is highly contagious and lethal to poultry, and therefore also potentially carries billion dollar trade impacts *if detected in commercial flocks*.

The last time this virus was introduced into the United States was in 2002, also in southern California. At that time, the virus was initially detected in backyard flocks and eventually spilled over into 22 commercial poultry farms, resulting in the death of 3.2 million birds and a response cost of over \$160 million. Aggressive actions are currently being taken to control the disease in backyard exhibition birds and tighten biosecurity around commercial premises to reduce this risk. To date, these actions have been successful and commercial poultry have not been affected.

However, we are over three months into this outbreak and continue to confirm multiple cases in backyard poultry per week. While we have successfully eliminated the virus from several infected zones, we still have hot spots in four counties: San Bernardino, Riverside, Los Angeles and Ventura. Because it is easy to hide and potentially move a sick bird, we ask that all commercial producers in California continue elevated biosecurity measures. Examples include: employee education intended to minimize the risk of inadvertently carrying virus onto your facility, ensuring that personal protective gear or dedicated shoes and clothing are used when entering live bird areas, controlling human and equipment traffic flow to best protect your flocks, verifying that your cleaning and disinfection procedures are adequate and are being followed every time, and most important, strictly limiting people that come into contact with your live bird areas, including a temporary deferral of government inspection where possible.

While wild birds are not thought to play a major role in the spread of Newcastle, they can become infected *or* mechanically carry the virus. *Therefore, we are also asking that those who can separate their poultry from wild birds, continue to do so. House them inside if possible.* Further, if there are loose poultry (i.e. not in designated confinement areas) on your premises, if possible, capture and isolate or euthanize them.

We will reassess the risk by November 1, 2018 and rescind or modify this request based on additional disease investigation information. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Annette Jones  
State Veterinarian  
California Department of Food and Agriculture

