



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF  
FOOD & AGRICULTURE

Karen Ross, Secretary

May 17, 2018

All poultry owners in California:

Virulent Newcastle disease was confirmed in backyard poultry today, May 17, 2018, in southern California. This virus, which is normally not found in the United States, is highly contagious and lethal to poultry, and therefore also carries multibillion-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. *Action must be taken now to try and avoid a similar scenario in 2018.*

Effective immediately, please elevate your biosecurity measures by ensuring that your employees do not inadvertently carry virus onto your facility, ensuring that personal protective gear or dedicated shoes and clothing are used when entering, 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 that can separate their poultry from wild birds, do so.

Since the disease investigation is on-going and we do not yet have a full understanding of the extent of the outbreak, all poultry producers in the State should follow these precautions, but they are particularly critical for poultry farms in southern California.

We will reassess the risk by July 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.

