

March 22, 2019

Poultry Disease Update and Biosecurity Advisory

To: California Poultry Producers

The risk of diseases entering your flock is always present but can be mitigated. Enhanced biosecurity is critical in the face of the ongoing vND outbreak and current wild bird migration season.

Since May 2018, over 435 virulent Newcastle disease (vND) infected premises have been identified in Southern California and new cases continue to be found. Recently, a new case was confirmed in Northern California. One chicken, submitted to a veterinary office in Redwood City, by a backyard bird owner that lived in Alameda County, was confirmed positive for vND and euthanized. At this moment, CDFA and USDA are not aware of any other cases in Northern California, but are very actively investigating.

Virulent Newcastle disease, previously known as exotic Newcastle disease, is a fast-spreading virus that affects the respiratory, nervous and digestive system of numerous bird species, but most severely in poultry. The last outbreak in the U.S. occurred in Southern California in 2002, resulting in the death of 3.2 million birds and a response cost of over \$160 million. While wild birds are not thought to play a major role in the spread of vND, they can become infected or mechanically carry virus.

Last Fall 2018, there were five confirmed cases of H7N3 low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) in Stanislaus County. While LPAI is not as fast-spreading and in some cases asymptomatic, it has the potential to mutate to highly pathogenic avian influenza which is highly lethal to poultry. Some strains of avian influenza (AI) can also be a public health concern. While these strains currently have not been found in wild birds in California, they have been found in migrating and domestic birds in other parts of the world. Even common strains of AI can mutate to a more dangerous form, so vigilance is critical.

To protect your flocks, you should house poultry indoors and separate from wild birds, particularly migrating waterfowl.

The risk to each farm may be different, so it is important to consider your situation when complying with this recommendation. If you are certified organic and want to make changes to housing, you must contact your certifier *before* altering confinement. In the event your certifier resists approval of this state-issued recommendation, please have them contact our department for verification. Because we are not entirely sure where the next threat from vND will be detected, please maintain this heightened biosecurity effort through July 1, 2019, when we will provide an updated risk evaluation. Thank you for your cooperation.

For updates, biosecurity tips, and more information about the current vND outbreak, please visit: the CDFA Avian Health Page (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/AHFSS/Animal_Health/Avian_Health_Program.html) and the CDFA Virulent Newcastle Disease Page (www.cdfa.ca.gov/go/VND)

Sincerely,

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

