



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
FOOD & AGRICULTURE

Karen Ross, Secretary

July 2, 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 low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) and virulent Newcastle disease (vND) incidents.

In April 2019, there was a confirmed case of H5N2 LPAI in Monterey County. Then another, unrelated case of H7 LPAI (full virus isolation pending) was confirmed last week in Merced 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. The strains detected are consistent with North American lineage LPAI typically found in migrating birds. While these specific strains have never been associated with a human health threat, they trigger a regulatory control response in an effort to quickly eliminate them from domestic flocks where mutations are more likely to occur.

In addition, vND eradication efforts are on-going in Southern California. 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.

Since May 2018, 448 vND infected premises have been identified in California. Thanks to cooperation from Southern California residents in very difficult circumstances, and a tremendous commitment from emergency response teams, the joint CDFA/USDA Virulent Newcastle Disease Project staff has found no new positive detections of the disease since June 4, 2019. Teams are currently testing poultry in areas previously known to have infected birds in order to find any remaining pockets of disease. Now is a crucial time for adherence to biosecurity as we move closer to eradication.

To protect your flocks, you should continue to 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 avian influenza or virulent Newcastle disease will be detected, please maintain this heightened biosecurity effort through October 1, 2019, when we will provide an updated risk evaluation. Thank you for your cooperation.

For more information about the current LPAI and vND incidents, please visit: the CDFA Avian Health Page (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/AHFSS/Animal_Health/Avian_Health_Program.html)

Sincerely,

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

