



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

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Animal Health Advisory February 2019

Be aware of the threat: Virulent Newcastle Disease (vND)

An outbreak of virulent Newcastle disease (vND) that began in California in May 2018 is cause for concern within the Delaware Department of Agriculture, as well as the poultry industry. Delaware has over 700 producers who raise commercial broiler chickens and over 1,000 small backyard poultry owners. Delaware also has three commercial egg laying facilities. All poultry owners need to be aware of the clinical signs of vND, communicate with their veterinarians or report disease to our office (302-698-4500), and increase biosecurity to protect their flocks. Even a small farm with just a few chickens could become infected and spread the virus to other farms in Delaware. The vND virus does not pose a threat to human health or food safety. In very rare instances, people working directly with sick birds can become infected with mild symptoms, such as conjunctivitis. Consult your physician if this develops.

Scope of the California outbreak

Since May 2018, USDA has confirmed 340 cases of vND in California, including 108 in San Bernardino County, 190 in Riverside County, 41 in Los Angeles County and 1 in Ventura County. USDA also confirmed 1 case in Utah County, Utah.

Why is vND in California a threat to Delaware?

Birds are easily transported across state lines. It is possible that an infected group of chickens from California could be brought into Delaware while incubating the disease. Although the birds might appear healthy at first, they could become sick during the trip or upon arrival in Delaware, subsequently infecting any other poultry they encounter once in our State. While California has strict quarantine zones established around known infected flocks in their state, it is not inconceivable that a small group of birds from outside the zone could be smuggled out to other states in the US.

What are signs of vND in poultry?

- Sudden death and increased death loss in flock;
- Sneezing, gasping for air, nasal discharge, coughing;
- Greenish, watery diarrhea;
- Decreased activity, tremors, drooping wings, twisting of head and neck, circling, complete stiffness; and
- Swelling around the eyes and neck.

Bird owners should enlist the help of their veterinarians if they observe sick poultry so that a diagnosis can be made. If you don't have a veterinarian, you can call the Delaware Department of Agriculture to report illness or death in your flock. You can call DDA at 302-698-4500 during business hours or use our after-hours emergency number: 302-233-1480.

Photos of poultry affected with vND may be viewed at:

<http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/disease-images.php?name=newcastle-disease&lang=en>

Veterinarians who visit your farm will need to collect oral swabs for testing at the University of Delaware Lasher Laboratory to confirm or rule out disease.

How is vND spread?

The disease spreads when healthy birds come in direct contact with bodily fluids from sick birds. The virus that causes vND is shed in both feces and respiratory secretions. Disease is transmitted by inhalation, ingestion, or direct contact with sick birds. Additionally, the virus can travel on manure, egg flats, crates, farming materials or equipment, and people who have picked up the virus on their clothing, shoes, or hands. The disease affects almost all birds and poultry, even vaccinated poultry which may not show signs of disease but could be shedding the virus. Infection has been found in poultry, game birds, ratites (ostriches, rheas, emus), and various pet, hobby and zoo birds.

Protect your birds by taking a few simple steps. These include:

- Restricting traffic onto and off of your property.
- Disinfecting shoes, clothes, hands, egg trays or flats, crates, vehicles, and tires.
- Avoiding visits to other poultry farms or bird owners. If you do, be sure to change clothes and clean your hands and shoes before entering your own bird area.
- Washing hands and scrubbing boots before and after entering a poultry area.
- Isolating any new birds or birds returning from shows for 30 days before placing them with the rest of the flock.

What to do if your birds become sick or die

Immediately contact your veterinarian or call DDA at 302-698-4500 during business hours or use our after-hours emergency number 302-233-1480.

Resources

More information about vND and the situation in California can be found online through the California Department of Food and Agriculture at:

https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal_Health/Newcastle_Disease_Info.html