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Virulent Newcastle Disease

Last Modified:



Virulent Newcastle disease, formerly known as exotic Newcastle disease, is a contagious and fatal viral disease of birds and poultry. It attacks their respiratory, nervous, and digestive systems. Many birds and poultry die without showing any clinical signs.

Virulent Newcastle disease is not a food safety concern. Properly cooked poultry products are safe to eat. In very rare cases, people working directly with sick birds

can develop mild symptoms, such as conjunctivitis. This is easily prevented by using personal protective equipment.

What To Look For

Virulent Newcastle disease spreads quickly. Signs can include:

- Sudden death and increased death loss in flock
- Sneezing, gasping for air, nasal discharge, difficulty breathing
- Greenish, watery diarrhea
- Ruffled feathers
- Lack of appetite
- Decreased activity, tremors, drooping wings, twisting of head and neck, circling, complete stiffness
- Swelling around the eyes and neck
- Marked decrease in egg production and egg quality

How To Prevent This Disease

Virulent Newcastle disease spreads when healthy birds come in direct contact with bodily fluids from sick birds. The disease affects almost all birds and poultry, even vaccinated poultry. The virus can travel on manure, egg flats, crates, other farming materials or equipment, and people who have picked up the virus on their clothing, shoes, or hands. In a single day, the virus can multiply and infect every bird on your premises. The best way to keep your poultry healthy is to practice biosecurity.

- Restrict traffic onto and off your property.
- Disinfect shoes, clothes, hands, egg trays or flats, crates, vehicles, and tires.
- Avoid visits to other poultry farms or bird owners. If you do visit, be sure to change clothes and clean your hands and shoes before entering your own bird area.
- Wash hands and scrub boots before and after entering a poultry area.
- Isolate/quarantine any birds returning from shows for 30 days to look for any signs of disease before placing them with the rest of the flock.

When introducing new birds to your flock:

- Buy from a reputable hatchery or dealer, and request certification from suppliers that the birds were legally imported or come from U.S. stock and were healthy before shipment.
- Maintain records of all sales and shipments of flocks.
- Keep new birds separated from your other birds for at least 30 days.
- Keep young and old birds and birds of different species and from different sources apart.

Visit [Defend the Flock](#) to find more tips for preventing this and other poultry diseases. Visit [Virulent Newcastle Disease Emergency Response](#) to learn how APHIS would respond to an outbreak.

How It Is Treated

There is no treatment. If you are concerned or suspect your birds may have virulent Newcastle disease, call your [accredited veterinarian](#) immediately. Your accredited veterinarian will contact the correct officials in your State and give you instructions on enhancing biosecurity so the disease is not spread to other healthy birds.

Report Signs of Animal Disease

Producers or owners who suspect an animal disease should contact their veterinarian to evaluate the animal or herd. [Find an accredited veterinarian](#).

Animal health professionals (veterinarians; diagnostic laboratories; public health, zoo, or wildlife personnel; and others) report diagnosed or suspected cases of [nationally listed reportable animal diseases](#) to [APHIS Area Veterinarians in Charge](#) and to the [State animal health official](#) as applicable under State reporting regulations.

Controlling Virulent Newcastle Disease

Epidemiologic Analyses of Previous Outbreaks

- [Epidemiologic Analyses of Virulent Newcastle Disease in Poultry in California \(March 2021\)](#)
- [Epidemiologic Analyses of Virulent Newcastle Disease in Poultry \(July 2019\)](#)
- [Epidemiologic Analyses of Virulent Newcastle Disease in Backyard Birds \(August 2018\)](#)
- [Epidemiologic Analyses of Virulent Newcastle Disease in Backyard Birds \(December 2018\)](#)

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