



# Factsheet

## Virulent Newcastle Disease

As part of its overall mission to protect American agriculture, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) works to keep the country's livestock and poultry healthy. APHIS works to keep foreign animal diseases out of the country and responds when cases do appear in the nation's herds and flocks.

One disease of concern in virulent Newcastle disease, previously referred to as Exotic Newcastle Disease. Virulent Newcastle disease is a deadly viral disease affecting all species of birds. Virulent Newcastle disease spreads quickly and can infect and cause death even in vaccinated poultry. All bird owners should be aware of the basics, how to help prevent the disease, and the steps to take if you suspect your birds may have it.

### Know the Signs of Virulent Newcastle Disease

If you see any of the following signs in your birds, they could be sick and should be checked out:

- 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.

### Report Sick Birds ASAP

If your birds are sick or dying, report it right away! Early detection and testing of possible cases of virulent Newcastle disease is critical to preventing a large-scale outbreak.

Contact your agricultural extension office/agent, local veterinarian, local animal health diagnostic laboratory, or the State veterinarian. Or, call USDA toll free at **1-866-536-7593**, and we'll put you in touch with a local contact. There's no charge for a disease investigation.

### How Virulent Newcastle Disease Spreads

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.

### **Prevent Virulent Newcastle Disease with Good Biosecurity**

The best way to keep your birds healthy is to practice biosecurity. Birds can become sick or die from exposure to just a few unseen bacteria, viruses or parasites. In a single day, these germs can multiply and infect every bird on your premises.

So 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; and
- Isolating any birds returning from shows for 30 days before placing them with the rest of the flock.

### **Smart Practices When Buying Birds**

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. Also, 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.