



## **Exotic Newcastle Disease – How it could happen here**

As some of you may know, there was an outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease (END) in California that was first found in a backyard flock in the southern portion of the state in Oct. 2002. This disease has now jumped to commercial egg farms and has been found in small flocks in both Nevada and Arizona. This is a classic case of human vector transmission of disease, as persons transported the disease from contact with the California infected flocks to the commercial flocks that were housed in confinement buildings. So far, over 1.6 million chickens have been eradicated because of this disease, and there are a few more farms to depopulate by USDA. As seen with AI, testing & eradication is the only approved methods for controlling the disease.

The disease is caused by a virus that attacks both the central nervous system as well as the respiratory system. Sudden mortality and a drop in egg production as well as acute respiratory distress are common in flocks with END. Virus strains would need to be typed at a lab to identify and confirm the disease, and several symptoms would appear that would not be seen in enzootic Newcastle disease. Autopsy (Necropsy) and typing of the virus is necessary to rule out other possible diseases in cases where there is sudden mortality or drop in egg production. Be sure to check feed and water levels, as these too could cause drops in egg production. Make sure that ventilation is adequate to keep manure and litter as dry as possible.

The largest factor in the California and other cases is the transport and exposure of poultry workers to other flocks of birds (both commercial and small flock) that may have carried the virus, or handled virus laden materials that travel from one farm to another. Review your biosecurity plans to ensure that all who work in the poultry industry know and follows sound security practices. Remember, a person may not have to enter a house to spread this type of virus. Flock security is everyone's priority even if we are not in contact with the birds on a continuous basis. Keep aware of traffic on the farm, log all visits, use all on-farm barriers to cross-contamination and reduce all unnecessary visits to the farm and in the houses themselves.

Time is not on our side with this disease. If you should see symptoms, contact your serviceman, veterinarian or extension agent for further diagnosis and direction. If you should have questions please contact me.

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