FAST FACTS

Newcastle Disease

What is Newcastle disease and what causes it?

Newcastle disease is a contagious viral disease of birds and considered one of the most important poultry diseases worldwide. The disease can vary from mild to severe. A highly contagious and severe form of the disease, called exotic Newcastle disease (END), is so deadly that many birds die suddenly without showing any signs of disease.

What animals get Newcastle disease?

Both domestic and wild birds can be affected by Newcastle disease. Chickens are very susceptible to the disease. Turkeys, ducks, geese, as well as parrots, pigeons and wild cormorants can also get END.

How can my animal get Newcastle disease?

Newcastle disease is spread by **direct contact** with the droppings or respiratory discharges of infected birds. The virus can live for a long time in the environment and can be spread by objects (**fomites**), such as shoes, clothing, and equipment, that have become contaminated by infected birds. Outbreaks have occurred from the illegal imports of exotic birds.

How does Newcastle disease affect my animal?

Newcastle disease in birds can vary from no signs of illness to sudden death. Affected birds may have coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge, depression, and diarrhea. Chicken flocks may have a sudden decrease in egg production or produce thin shelled eggs. Signs of severe illness include swelling of the tissues of the head, muscle tremors, drooping wings, twisted head, circling, paralysis or sudden death.

Can I get Newcastle disease?

Yes. Infection is rare and usually very mild. People in **direct contact** with infected poultry or other birds can get conjunctivitis (swelling and reddening of the tissues around the eyes. Poultry crews and laboratory workers would be at the greatest risk for potential exposure to the virus during their work. No human cases of Newcastle disease have occurred from eating poultry products.

Who should I contact, if I suspect Newcastle disease?

In Animals – Contact your veterinarian immediately. Exotic Newcastle disease is not currently found in the U.S.; suspicion of the disease requires immediate attention.

In Humans – Contact your physician. Tell him or her you have been in contact with birds with Newcastle disease.



is a severe viral disease of poultry that can affect humans.

Photo from USDA OnLine Photography Center.

How can I protect my animals from Newcastle disease?

Prevent your birds from becoming exposed to infected birds. Biosecurity measures, such as cleaning and disinfection of bird-housing facilities and equipment is very important.

New introductions or birds returning to the farm should be isolated for several weeks before being placed into the flock.

A vaccine is available for birds and is routinely used in poultry flocks. While this can reduce the severity of the disease, it does not completely prevent infection.

How can I protect myself from Newcastle disease?

When working with birds or poultry, especially when they are ill, wear protective clothing such as gloves, and safety glasses. Wash your hands after contact with birds or poultry. Avoid touching your eyes until your hands have been washed. People working with the virus in laboratories or on vaccination crews should take extra precautions.

For More Information

- CFSPH Technical Fact Sheets. Newcastle Disease at http://www.cfsph.iastate. edu/DiseaseInfo/
- USDA-APHIS-VS website. http://www. aphis.usda.gov/lpa/pubs/fsheet_faq_ notice/fs_ahend.pdf

