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Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) Nebraska Poultry Producers Quick Reference

by Grasso M. Ebako, Extension and Diagnostic Poultry Veterinarian
Del Wilmot, Deputy State Veterinarian

Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) is a foreign animal disease in the U.S. and is considered the most infectious, contagious, and fatal viral disease of birds and poultry. With death rates approaching 100 percent in unvaccinated poultry flocks, END is so virulent that many birds die without developing clinical signs. The disease is characterized by respiratory distress (gasping), or encephalitis (brain infection), or both. It is highly fatal to young chicks and causes a severe drop in egg production in laying flocks.

Current Outbreaks of END

Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) was confirmed on October 1, 2002, in California, and it has spread beyond backyard flocks to affect seven large commercial operations in California. On January 16, 2003, END was also confirmed in a backyard flock in Nevada. An additional backyard flock was confirmed with END on February 4, 2003, in Arizona.

How Does END Spread?

It can be airborne or introduced through either contact with contaminated shoes, caretakers, feed deliveries, visitors, tires, dirty equipment, feed sacks, crates, or wild birds.

What Producers/Backyard Farmers Should Do

If your birds become ill or you see an unusual rise in mortality, please call Extension and Diagnostic Poultry Veterinarian Dr. Grasso Ebako, (402) 472-1434; Deputy State Veterinarian Dr. Del Wilmot, (402) 471-6837 or USDA (402) 434-2300. In addition:

- Do not visit live bird markets.
- Discourage employees from raising their own birds or visiting premises with poultry.
- Check your flock daily for any signs of illness.

- Enforce strict biosecurity on all farms and buildings.
- Ensure that your chicks are properly vaccinated. Consult your local veterinarian.
- Institute a program to clean and disinfect equipment frequently.
- Pest-proof all buildings to restrict wild bird access into the poultry houses.
- Be aware of where your birds/poultry come from, especially states with confirmed END.
- Keep new birds in isolation (>3 weeks) before mixing with others.
- Pet birds should be kept isolated from poultry.

Disease prevention is the only logical approach because there is no specific treatment for END. If you have any questions or require assistance in testing your birds call:

- Dr. Ebako: (402) 472-1434;
- Dr. Wilmot: (402) 471-6837;
- USDA: (402) 434-2300 (or 1-800-572-2437, M-F, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.).

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