

Virulent Newcastle Disease

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What is Virulent Newcastle disease?

Virulent Newcastle disease is a highly contagious, viral disease that can affect bird species, both wild and domestic. Virulent Newcastle Disease is not normally present in the United States. The last widespread outbreak in the U.S. was in 2003 in southern California and parts of Nevada, Arizona and Texas. The last Minnesota outbreak was in 1992, when more than 20,000 double-crested cormorants died in Minnesota and the Dakotas.

Is it contagious, who is susceptible and how is it transmitted?

- Yes, it is contagious among birds
- Humans in close contact with infected birds can develop mild conjunctivitis (pinkeye)
- The disease may spread through contact with infected feces and respiratory discharge
- The disease can also be transmitted through contact with infected birds and contaminated objects in the environment (food, water, equipment and human clothing)
- The disease can survive for long periods of time in the environment and in feces.

What are the signs of virulent Newcastle disease in birds?

- Sudden death
- Decreased egg production
- Respiratory distress, such as coughing, gasping
- Digestive problems such as green, watery diarrhea
- Nervous system disorders such as tremors, paralysis
- Swelling of the head and neck
- Signs of disease take two to 15 days to develop after exposure to the virus

How do I avoid virulent Newcastle disease or stop it from spreading?

- Know the signs and symptoms
- Prevent domestic birds from coming in contact with wild birds
- Use strict biosecurity measures
 - o Disinfect equipment used for birds
 - o Be sure that healthy birds do not have contact with contaminated birds
 - o Isolate new or returning birds at least two weeks before reintroduction into the flock
 - o Wash and disinfect items taken while traveling abroad
 - o Quarantine contaminated area and isolate infected birds immediately
 - o Notify veterinarian of any suspected disease
- Do not bring smuggled or illegal birds into the country
- Vaccinations may be used to prevent the disease if used prior to exposure, however they can interfere with diagnostic testing
- Infected birds need to be humanely destroyed to prevent the spread of the disease

How is virulent Newcastle disease treated?

- At this time, there is no known treatment

Are there public health risks?

- Humans in direct contact with infected birds can develop mild conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- This disease does not pose any major health threat for the general public
- Eggs and meat from infected birds are safe for human consumption

Sources: Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture and Journal of Wildlife