

Virulent Newcastle Disease (vND)

Last Modified: Apr 3, 2020

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/virulent-newcastle/vnd>

Virulent Newcastle disease, formerly known as exotic Newcastle disease, is a contagious and fatal viral disease affecting the respiratory, nervous and digestive systems of birds and poultry. The disease is so virulent that many birds and poultry die without showing any clinical signs.

Virulent Newcastle disease is not a food safety concern. No human cases of Newcastle disease have ever occurred from eating poultry products. Properly cooked poultry products are safe to eat. In very rare instances, people *working directly with sick birds* can become infected with mild symptoms, such as conjunctivitis. These are easily prevent with personal protective equipment.

As of **April 3, 2020**, USDA has confirmed 476 premises in California as infected with vND, including 262 in Riverside County, 164 in San Bernardino County, 46 in Los Angeles County, 1 in Ventura County, 1 in Alameda County, and 1 in San Diego County. USDA also confirmed 1 infected premises in Utah County, Utah and 1 infected premises in Coconino County, Arizona.

Why is Virulent Newcastle Disease a Concern?

Virulent Newcastle disease is one of the most serious poultry diseases worldwide. A death rate of almost 100 percent can occur in unvaccinated poultry flocks. Virulent Newcastle disease can infect and cause death even in vaccinated poultry.

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.

A domestic introduction could cause devastating effects on the poultry industry and have a significant impact on trade. A large vND outbreak would have long-term economic consequences and an extensive recovery period.

What Are the Signs of Virulent Newcastle Disease?

Clinical signs in chickens include:

- 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.

Preventing Disease through Biosecurity

It is essential that all poultry owners follow good biosecurity practices to help protect their birds from infectious diseases. These simple steps include:

- Washing hands and scrubbing boots before and after entering a poultry area;
- Cleaning and disinfecting tires and equipment before moving them off the property; and
- Isolating any birds returning from shows for 30 days before placing them with the rest of the flock.

All bird owners should report sick birds or unusual bird deaths to State/Federal officials right away, either through their state veterinarian or through USDA's toll-free number at **1-866-536-7593**.

For more information about biosecurity practices, visit USDA's [Defend the Flock website](#).

Additional Resources

- [vND Factsheet](#)
- [END Card](#)
- [Epidemiologic Analyses of VND in Poultry, July 2019](#)
- [Epidemiologic Analyses of VND in Backyard Birds, August 2018](#)
- [Epidemiologic Analyses of VND in Backyard Birds, December 2018](#)