



United States Department of Agriculture  
 Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
 Veterinary Services/California-Nevada Area Office  
 10365 Old Placerville Rd., Suite 210  
 Sacramento, California 95827  
 (916) 854-3950 – office



California Department of Food and Agriculture  
 Office of the State Veterinarian  
 Animal Health and Food Safety Services  
 1220 N Street  
 Sacramento, California 95814  
 (916) 900-5000 – office

May 21, 2018

Dear Bird Owner:

NOTICE: We are investigating an incidence of virulent Newcastle disease that was found on May 18, 2018 in a small flock of backyard exhibition chickens in Los Angeles County, California. This is the first case of virulent Newcastle disease (VND), previously referred to as exotic Newcastle disease, in the U.S. since 2003.

**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. Symptoms are usually very mild, and limited to conjunctivitis and/or fever. Infection is easily prevented by using standard personal protective equipment.

Virulent Newcastle disease, is a highly contagious and deadly virus in birds; the virus is found in respiratory discharges and feces. Clinical signs in birds include sneezing, coughing, nasal discharge, green watery diarrhea, depression, paralysis, decreased egg production, swelling around eyes and neck, and sudden death. You can find more information and images of some of the clinical signs on the attached fact sheet.

Your birds depend on you to keep them healthy. **If you observe signs of illness or increased mortality, please call the Sick Bird Hotline, your local CDFA Animal Health Branch District office, or the USDA Veterinary Services (VS) toll free number below.** We also encourage you to submit any dead birds to the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory's Necropsy Services for California Backyard Poultry Owners Program (information included).

Contact Information	
Sick Bird Hotline	(866) 922-2473
CDFA Modesto District	(209) 491-9350
CDFA Ontario District	(909) 947-4462
CDFA Redding District	(530) 225-2140
CDFA Tulare District	(559) 685-3500
USDA-VS Toll Free	(877) 741-3690

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/>

[https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal\\_Health/newcastle\\_disease\\_info.html](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal_Health/newcastle_disease_info.html)

Sincerely,

Dr. Gary L. Brickler  
 USDA APHIS District Director SPRS 6

Dr. Annette Jones  
 California State Veterinarian



## Virulent Newcastle Disease: Information for Bird Owners

Virulent Newcastle disease (VND), previously known as exotic Newcastle disease and sometimes referred to as Asiatic or Doyle's form of Newcastle disease, is a contagious and fatal disease affecting all species of birds.

**Definition:** VND is a virulent strain of the Newcastle disease virus and is one of the most serious disease of chickens throughout the world. It is characterized by the lesions produced in the gastrointestinal tract or the brain. In susceptible chickens, morbidity rates approach 100% and mortality rates may exceed 95%.

**Host:** All birds, both domestic and wild, are susceptible to VND. The mortality and morbidity rates vary drastically between species and with the strain of virus. In poultry, chickens are very susceptible to the disease, while ducks and geese tend to be resistant. Mortality rates in psittacine birds have ranged from zero up to 75% prior to depopulation. Certain psittacine birds, especially Amazon parrots, have been demonstrated to shed VND virus intermittently in excess of one year.

**Transmission:** Within an infected flock, VND is transmitted by direct contact, contaminated feeding and watering equipment, and by aerosols produced by coughing, gasping, and other disturbances of respiration. Dissemination between flocks over long distances have been due to movement of contaminated equipment and service personnel such as vaccination crews. Movement of carrier birds and those in an incubating stage account for most of the outbreaks in the pet bird industry.

**Clinical Signs:** There may be considerable variation in the severity of clinical signs, depending on species, age, vaccination, and natural resistance of the birds, as well as the virulence of the VND strain. Certain species demonstrate a period of depression, diarrhea, and loss of appetite. Clinical signs are more pronounced in susceptible chickens. Edema of the tissues around the eye, especially of the lower eyelid, are common. Straw colored exudate may flow from the mouth or nasal openings. Respiratory distress may vary from mild to severe. Clinical signs in turkeys and pet birds are usually mild. Neurologic symptoms, such as twisting of the head and neck (torticollis) and paralysis of the wings and/or legs are commonly seen 10-20 days following onset of clinical signs.



Twisting of the head and neck (torticollis)

**Human Health:** VND is not a food safety concern; properly cooked poultry products are safe to eat. In rare cases, humans that have exposure to infected birds may get eye inflammation or mild fever-like symptoms. These signs generally resolve without treatment, however, medical care should be sought if symptoms persist. Infection is easily prevented by using standard personal protective equipment.

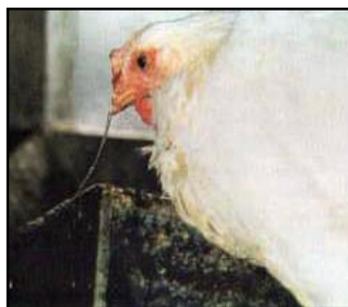
**Reporting:** This is a reportable disease under emergency conditions; suspect cases must be reported to CDFA within 24 hours.

To report an unusual number of sick or dead birds, call:

**Sick Bird Hotline**  
**(866) 922-2473**



Conjunctivitis and edema of the eyelids



Excessive fluids are commonly seen in the respiratory tract



Normal appearing chicken with a pale comb

### CDFA Animal Health Branch

Headquarters - (916) 900-5002

Redding District - (530) 225-2140

Modesto District - (209) 491-9350

Tulare District - (559) 685-3500

Ontario District - (909) 947-4462

**USDA-APHIS-VS** (916) 854-3950 or (877) 741-3690

For more information and updates on VND, please visit:

[https://www.cdffa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal\\_Health/Newcastle\\_Disease\\_Info.html](https://www.cdffa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal_Health/Newcastle_Disease_Info.html)

CDFA Animal Health Branch: [www.cdffa.ca.gov/ah](http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/ah)





## California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory Necropsy Services for California Backyard Poultry Owners

The California Animal Health and Food Safety (CAHFS) Laboratory System is the backbone of California's warning system that helps to protect the health of California's livestock and poultry. CAHFS serves the people of California by safeguarding public health with rapid and reliable diagnoses for animal diseases affecting humans. CAHFS operates in partnership with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), University of California, Davis (UCD), livestock and poultry producers, and California veterinarians.

**Veterinarians and owners of backyard poultry are encouraged to submit sick or recently dead birds for necropsy (postmortem) examination.**

The CAHFS necropsy service:

- Is available to California backyard flock owners of fewer than 1,000 birds (chickens, turkeys, waterfowl, and squab).
- Provides standard diagnostic work for a submission of one or two birds for a nominal fee of \$20. *Additional fees apply for pet birds, game birds, or racing pigeons,*
- Accepts sick or recently dead bird(s); carcass(es) must be kept cold (in a cooler or equivalent),
- Requires a submission form to be included at the time of submission. Submission form, guidelines, and shipping instructions can be found at: [http://www.cahfs.ucdavis.edu/local\\_resources/pdfs/submission%20forms/StandardSubmissionForm\\_11-16\\_BYF.pdf](http://www.cahfs.ucdavis.edu/local_resources/pdfs/submission%20forms/StandardSubmissionForm_11-16_BYF.pdf)
- Assists with the State's surveillance program to monitor and detect immediate threats of disease, and
- Obtains information from the diagnostic work that is invaluable for monitoring the spread of disease.



For more information, contact a local CAHFS Laboratory or CDFA:  
<http://www.cahfs.ucdavis.edu/>



**CAHFS - Davis Laboratory**  
University of California, Davis  
620 W. Health Sciences Drive  
Davis, California 95616  
**Telephone:** (530) 752-8700  
**E-mail:** [cahfsdavis@cahfs.ucdavis.edu](mailto:cahfsdavis@cahfs.ucdavis.edu)

**CAHFS - San Bernardino Laboratory**  
105 W. Central Avenue  
San Bernardino, California 92408  
**Telephone:** (909) 383-4287  
**E-mail:** [cahfs-sanbernardino@cahfs.ucdavis.edu](mailto:cahfs-sanbernardino@cahfs.ucdavis.edu)

**CAHFS - Tulare Laboratory**  
18760 Road 112  
Tulare, California 93274  
**Telephone:** (559) 688-7543  
**E-mail:** [cahfstulare@cahfs.ucdavis.edu](mailto:cahfstulare@cahfs.ucdavis.edu)

**CAHFS - Turlock Laboratory**  
1550 North Soderquist Road  
Turlock, California 95380  
**Telephone:** (209) 634-5837  
**E-mail:** [cahfsturlock@cahfs.ucdavis.edu](mailto:cahfsturlock@cahfs.ucdavis.edu)

To report an unusual number of sick or dead birds, call:  
**Sick Bird Hotline**  
**(866) 922-2473**

**CDFA Animal Health Branch**  
Headquarters - (916) 900-5002  
Redding District - (530) 225-2140  
Modesto District - (209) 491-9350  
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**\*Note:** *If delivered by mail, shipping and handling costs are at the owner's expense.*

For more information, please visit:  
[www.cdffa.ca.gov/ahfss/animal\\_health](http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/ahfss/animal_health)  
[Avian Health Program](#)

# Top Tips for Keeping Your Backyard Birds Healthy

1. Always buy your birds from a National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) Hatchery.



2. Prevent waterfowl and wild birds from coming in contact with your birds.



3. Wash hands before and after handling or coming in contact with your birds; have dedicated clothing and boots that you use when tending to your birds; Scrub and disinfect boots.



4. Avoid sharing equipment with neighbors or other bird owners unless thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.



5. Report an unusual number of sick or dead birds to: Sick Bird Hotline 1-866-922-BIRD

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