

February 7, 2003

To: Veterinary Colleagues

Subject: **EXOTIC NEWCASTLE DISEASE OUTBREAK IN CALIFORNIA POULTRY**

The Governor of California has declared a State of Emergency, the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has declared an Extraordinary Emergency, and San Diego, Riverside, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino Counties have declared local emergencies because of a serious outbreak of Exotic Newcastle disease (END) in birds. END was confirmed on October 1, 2002, in Los Angeles County. It has now spread beyond backyard poultry to affect commercial operations in California, birds in Nevada and Arizona, and is still spreading. All birds in Southern California have been placed under quarantine. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the USDA have over 1,500 people in Southern California fighting this devastating avian disease.

Exotic Newcastle Disease, previously known as velogenic viscerotropic Newcastle disease, is one of the most infectious diseases of poultry worldwide. All species of birds may be infected; birds may die suddenly, or show respiratory, nervous or gastrointestinal signs. Mortality can reach up to 90% in unvaccinated birds. Some species show few clinical signs and may serve as carriers/reservoirs of the virus.

Exotic Newcastle Disease spreads primarily through direct contact between healthy birds and the bodily discharges of infected birds. Infected birds shed large amounts of virus in their droppings and secretions from the nose, mouth, and eyes. The disease also spreads by mechanical means – virus-bearing material can be carried on vehicles, equipment, and individuals' shoes and clothing.

If your veterinary practice is located inside the federal quarantined areas of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, and dead birds are brought to your facility, please call the END task force at 1-800-491-1899. Treat the bird as if it were infected and carefully disinfect your facility using products effective against END. We recommend that dead birds are not brought to your practice, but collected by a task force member from your clients' premises. This can be arranged by calling the END task force hotline at 1-800-491-1899.

If your practice is located outside these federal quarantined areas and you have sick birds with clinical signs compatible with END, we recommend that you examine the birds at the owner's premises or in your parking lot, using strict biosecurity measures to ensure you do not spread the disease to other birds. If you suspect birds have END, please submit samples to the California Animal Health and Food Safety laboratory system (locations provided below). Federal and State laws require you to report END. There is no charge for laboratory work on END suspects. Double-bag samples, disinfect outside of the bag, keep cool, and deliver to the diagnostic laboratory within 24 hours or freeze for virus isolation.

Suitable disinfectants for END include Virkon S® (*Potassium Peroxymonosulfate*), Nolvasan®-S (*Chlorhexidine diacetate*), or Roccal®-D Plus (*Quaternary ammoniums with bis-n-tributylin oxide*), or household bleach (6% *sodium hypochlorite*). Use according to the manufacturer's directions.

Encourage all bird owners to protect the health of their birds by avoiding all unnecessary contact with other birds and using biosecurity measures to protect their birds. Infected birds and birds having direct contact with infected birds are humanely destroyed when disease is detected. Owners are compensated based on the value of the birds. For more information: call 1-800-491-1899 or visit the CDFA Web site at [http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/newcastle\\_info.htm](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/newcastle_info.htm), or the USDA Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/enc/exoticnc.html>.

Sincerely,

Signature on file

Richard E. Breitmeyer, DVM, MPVM  
Director and State Veterinarian  
Animal Health and Food Safety Services

Signature on file

Paul O. Ugstad, DVM  
Area Veterinarian in Charge  
USDA/APHIS, Veterinary Services

Report suspect END cases either to your closest CDFA Animal Health Branch (AHB) District Office: Redding 530-225-2140, Modesto 209-491-9350, Tulare 559-685-3500, Ontario 909-947-4462, Headquarters 916-654-1447, or the USDA/APHIS Veterinary Services office 916-857-6170 or toll free at 1-877-741-3690.

California Animal Health and Food Safety laboratory system facilities are located at:

San Bernardino:	105 West Central Avenue, San Bernardino, CA 92408	Tel 909-383-4287	Fax 909-884-5980
Fresno:	2789 South Orange Avenue, Fresno, CA 93725	Tel 559-498-7740	Fax 559-485-8097
Turlock:	1550 N. Soderquist, Turlock, CA 95381	Tel 209-634-5837	Fax 209-667-4261
Davis:	West Health Science Drive, UC Davis, CA 95616	Tel 530-752-8700	Fax 530-752-5680