



## Information for Neighbors: Exotic Newcastle Disease Outbreak in Backyard Poultry in Southern California

**What is Exotic Newcastle Disease?** Exotic Newcastle Disease is a serious, highly contagious viral disease of poultry and other birds. After an incubation period of 2-15 days, the disease may cause high rates of sickness and death in susceptible birds, especially chickens. Other types of birds may be infected with less serious effects. In some cases, birds may not appear sick but may carry and spread the disease to other birds. There is no effective cure, and vaccination is of limited value.

**Is this disease harmful to people?** No. Exotic Newcastle Disease is not a public health threat.

**Is it safe to eat poultry?** Yes! Poultry and eggs are safe to eat.

**When, where, and how did this outbreak start?** It started in late September 2002 in Southern California. Although the source of the disease is under investigation, the virus closely resembles one that devastated the poultry industry in Mexico in 2000. Over 13 million chickens either died or had to be killed to stop that outbreak.

**How does this disease spread?** Both sick and healthy looking birds can spread disease. Healthy looking birds may be incubating or recovering from disease, or a bird species not seriously affected by Exotic Newcastle Disease. People, also, can spread the disease to birds both directly and on contaminated clothing, possessions, equipment or vehicles exposed to the virus. Some outbreaks have implicated birds smuggled into the US - legally imported birds are quarantined and screened for this disease.

**What is being done to stop this outbreak?** Disease investigation crews are working in affected areas. They need the support of the whole community to quickly find sick birds. Infected birds and birds that may have been exposed to infection are humanely destroyed - this is the only way to stop the outbreak and protect other birds. After birds are removed, the

premises are thoroughly cleaned, disinfected and left empty for a time before reintroducing new birds. The surrounding neighborhood is checked for signs of disease.

**How is the neighborhood affected?** If you live near infected birds you may see people putting on white suits, plastic boots, eye goggles, masks and other special clothing before they enter the premises. This is to prevent workers from spreading infection after handling sick birds. Animal health officials are trained to take great precautions to prevent spreading disease from one area to another.

**What are they doing on the premises?** Infected birds are humanely destroyed and the affected area cleaned and disinfected as quickly and thoroughly as possible. Bird owners are compensated for their birds at fair market value. Bodies of birds are removed from the premises in a way that prevents infection from spreading.

**Will officials come to my house?** Animal health officials who have *not* been on affected premises will check the area and quarantine neighbors who own birds. Birds that have not been exposed to infected birds will be examined for signs of disease until the quarantine is lifted. Birds that have been exposed to disease may need to be humanely destroyed to stop this disease from spreading.

**What types of birds are involved in this outbreak?** Backyard poultry and pet and hobby birds have been affected since this investigation started. Backyard chickens are mostly involved.

**What can I do to help protect California's birds?**

- ✓ Share information about this disease with your friends and neighbors.
- ✓ Anonymously report sick and dying birds.
- ✓ Anonymously report illegally smuggled birds.
- ✓ Protect your birds.
- ✓ Cooperate with animal health officials who are trying to stop this devastating disease.

**We need the support of the whole community to stop the devastating impact of this disease on California's birds and bird owners.**

For more information and reports, call 1-800-491-1899 or visit our Web site at [www.cdffa.ca.gov](http://www.cdffa.ca.gov)