

NEWS RELEASE
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EXOTIC NEWCASTLE DISEASE

BACKYARD HORTICULTURE

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While we usually discuss backyard plants in this column, a new topic should be of interest to those with backyard chickens and other poultry. Exotic Newcastle Disease was discovered last year in southern California and has the potential to rapidly spread throughout the state. Already, the Mariposa County Fair has decided to close the poultry exhibits for this year.

This very contagious and fatal virus causes severe flu-like symptoms in birds and can cause up to 100% loss of flocks. Birds, including chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, and even parrots, can become infected. Exotic Newcastle Disease is not a public health threat and does not affect the safety of poultry or eggs. However, its effect on the poultry industry, including backyard production, could be serious.

With the support of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, over 1,200 people are already working to eradicate this disease in California. This virus disease can easily contaminate feed, water, clothing, and tools. To help prevent infection in your birds, several tactics should be used:

1. Isolation – do not introduce new birds to your flock from any areas that may have been exposed to this disease.
2. Traffic control – do not allow visitors to enter bird areas if they have been in the eight counties of southern California and could be carrying the virus on their clothes or cars.

3. Sanitation – Exotic Newcastle Disease virus can survive at room temperatures for months. However, it is sensitive to most common disinfectants and vehicles and tools should be cleaned regularly.

Contacts

If you suspect your birds have Exotic Newcastle Disease or need more information, a special telephone hotline number has been established at 1-800-491-1899. The website address is www.cdфа.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/newcastle_info.htm.

Weather Facts:

January, 2003 total rainfall 1.24 inches (normal 6.20).

High temperature 75 degrees

Low temperature 33 degrees

Days 32 degrees or lower - zero

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