



Riverside County
NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Ruben Arroyo
Riverside County Agricultural Commissioner
(951) 955-3000

Virulent Newcastle disease detected in Riverside County

A confirmed case of virulent Newcastle disease was found in northwest Riverside County on June 30. The disease affects birds and can cause serious illness or death in an entire chicken flock in a single day.

The Riverside County location is close to other occurrences of the disease in southwest San Bernardino County. At this time, the single location is the only known incidence in Riverside County. All locations, including in Riverside County, involve backyard exhibition chickens.

“This disease is so virulent it could significantly affect the poultry industry nationwide if it reaches commercial flocks,” said Riverside County Agricultural Commissioner Ruben Arroyo. “We are taking extra precautions to reduce the risk of tracking disease on and off farms by limiting farm visits to those that are essential to health and safety.”

Virulent Newcastle disease can cause serious illness or death to an entire flock of chickens within a single day. Riverside County officials urge backyard chicken owners to protect their birds and prevent the spread of the disease by taking the following precautions, known as biosecurity measures:

- Do not move chickens from your home until the situation is resolved.
- Restrict traffic onto and off of your property.
- Disinfect shoes, clothes, hands, egg trays or flats, crates, vehicles and tires.
- Avoid visits to other poultry farms or bird owners. If you visit, be sure to change clothes and clean your hands and shoes before entering your own bird area.
- Wash hands and scrub boots before and after entering a poultry area.
- Isolate any birds returning from shows for 30 days before placing them with the rest of the flock.

“Owners of backyard chickens should not buy new birds, trade their birds or move their birds until this matter is resolved,” said Dr. Allan Drusys, Riverside County’s chief veterinarian.

If your chickens die suddenly or show signs of illness, call California’s Sick Bird Hotline at 866-922-BIRD (2473). Symptoms of the disease include sneezing, gasping for air, nasal discharge, coughing, greenish diarrhea, reduced activity, tremors, drooping wings, twisting of the head and neck, circling, complete stiffness and swelling around the eyes and neck.

No human cases of Newcastle disease have ever occurred from eating poultry products, which are safe to eat if thoroughly cooked. In rare instances, people working directly with sick birds can become infected. Symptoms usually are mild and limited to conjunctivitis. People can easily prevent infection by wearing protective equipment, such as gloves, goggles, face masks, boots and disposable coveralls.

Additional information is available on the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s [Biosecurity for Birds website](#), as well as the California Department of Food and Agriculture’s [Virulent Newcastle Disease Alert website](#).