

Outbreak of Newcastle disease in commercial poultry flocks, NSW

An outbreak of Newcastle disease (ND) has occurred, involving two commercial poultry flocks in western Sydney (Blacktown and Glenorie) and linked to a third flock at Rylstone 160 km north-west of Sydney.

ND is a highly contagious virus disease affecting poultry, cage and aviary birds, and wild birds. There are a number of strains of the disease, which differ in the severity of their clinical signs, ranging from inapparent to a rapidly fatal condition. In its highly virulent form, ND can rapidly cause up to 100 per cent mortality in bird flocks and poses a devastating threat to the poultry industry. Strains are found in most countries but the virulent form has not previously occurred in Australia.

The virus belongs to the family Paramyxoviridae and causes digestive, respiratory and/or nervous signs in birds.

ND does not present any public health risk to consumers of poultry products, including poultry meat, eggs and other

chicken products. People exposed to high levels of the virus, for example laboratory workers, may experience conjunctivitis and/or mild influenza-like symptoms.

Control measures have been implemented in accordance with the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (Ausvetplan) for ND and include quarantine, surveillance, destruction of poultry, and disinfection of the affected properties. The eradication program is funded jointly by all State and Federal Governments.

More information about Newcastle disease and the outbreak can be found on the NSW Department of Agriculture website at:

<http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au/news/nd/>

and on the website of the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer at:

<http://www.dpie.gov.au/ocvo>.

A pictorial account is at:

<http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au/news/nd/pictures.htm>.