

## Questions and Answers: Biosecurity For the Birds

### Q. What is *Biosecurity For the Birds*?

A. *Biosecurity For the Birds* is an outreach and education campaign begun in 2004, to reach out to backyard poultry producers and bird owners to educate them about the signs of infectious poultry disease, the need to practice backyard biosecurity, and the importance of reporting sick or dead birds.

### Q. What is “backyard biosecurity?”

A. “Backyard biosecurity” means doing everything you can to protect your birds from disease. There are six basic steps you can take to protect your flocks and practice good “Biosecurity for the Birds”:

1. Limit unwanted traffic to your property and your birds.
2. Keep it clean. Use bleach or other disinfectant on your shoes, clothes, egg trays, flats, and tools. Wash your hands thoroughly.
3. Don't haul disease home on your truck or car. Clean and disinfect car and truck tires, cages, and equipment before going home if you've been near other birds.
4. Don't borrow diseases from other farms by using your neighbor's equipment, cages, tools, or supplies.
5. Know the warning signs of infectious bird diseases.
6. Report any sick birds to your local cooperative extension agent, local veterinarian, the State veterinarian, State diagnostic laboratory, or the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) office at 1-866-536-7593.

### Q. Why should I care about biosecurity?

A. If you own poultry, keeping your birds healthy is a top priority. Outbreaks of bird diseases, such as exotic Newcastle disease (END) or avian influenza (AI), can spread and kill flocks quickly. An outbreak can happen anywhere, and these diseases can spread to surrounding birds if not immediately reported and contained. Early detection and reporting are the most important steps in eradicating a disease outbreak.

### Q. What is AI or bird flu?

A. “Avian influenza” or bird flu is a highly contagious viral disease that can infect many types of birds, thus the common name of bird flu. For more information go to <<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/birdbiosecurity>>.

### Q. What is END?

A. END, or exotic Newcastle disease, is a contagious and fatal poultry disease that affects chickens, turkeys, and many other species of birds. An outbreak of END in California and other western States in 2002–2003 cost Federal and State Governments more than \$170 million. Pet and poultry owners not only lost birds, but in some cases their livelihoods. For more information go to <<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/birdbiosecurity>>.

### Q. Can pet birds get these diseases?

A. Virtually all birds, including pet varieties, are susceptible to END and AI.

### Q. What are the warning signs of infectious bird diseases?

- A. 1. Sudden increase in bird deaths in your flock.  
 2. Sneezing, gasping for air, coughing, nasal discharge.  
 3. Watery and green diarrhea.  
 4. Lack of energy and poor appetite.  
 5. Drop in egg production or thin-shelled misshapen eggs.  
 6. Swelling around the eyes and neck and head.  
 7. Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs (AI).  
 8. Tremors, drooping wings, circling, twisting of head and neck, or lack of movement (END).

### Q. Who should you call?

A. Don't wait. If your birds are sick or dying, call your local cooperative extension office, local veterinarian, the State veterinarian, the State animal diagnostic laboratory, or USDA's Veterinary Services office to report it. USDA operates a toll-free hotline (1-866-536-7593) with veterinarians who can help you. There is no charge to conduct a disease investigation.

### Q. Should I report a sick bird even if I am not sure it is END or AI?

A. Yes. Let the experts make the determination.

It is better for people to be cautious than to let one of these highly contagious diseases go unreported.

**Q. How can I get more information on backyard biosecurity?**

**A.** You can find out more information by visiting USDA's *Biosecurity For the Birds* Web site at <[www.aphis.usda.gov/vs](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs)>.

**Q. What is APHIS?**

**A.** APHIS stands for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of USDA. The agency has the responsibility for protecting American agriculture from foreign animal diseases and for eradicating those diseases should they enter the country.

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