

Backyard Poultry Biosecurity

Practicing good biosecurity will help decrease the chance of poultry disease in backyard flocks. Contagious avian diseases spread very easily between birds, so biosecurity must be practiced at all times. Pathogens (viruses or bacteria) can be spread by movement of migratory birds and water fowl, people, vehicles, pets, clothing, machinery, insects, rodents, and contaminated material. Poultry diseases can be spread through manure when it gets on hands, shoes, cages, and equipment. Since wild birds can be infected without appearing sick, people should minimize direct contact with wild birds. If contact occurs, wash your hands with soap and water, and change clothing before having any contact with healthy domestic poultry and birds.



Keep Your Distance

- Restrict visitors because they could bring diseases to your birds.
- Don't let visitors bring their birds near yours.
- Move your birds away from an area where you expect visitors on a regular basis or fence off with a barrier.
- Designate a clean area which is inside the barrier and a dirty area which is outside the barrier.
- Keep pets, wild animals and waterfowl out of the clean area.
- Do not allow people or move objects across the barrier to the clean area without cleaning and disinfection. This is especially important if one has visited a bird market, aviary, pet shop, neighbor's birds, or a feed store.

Keep It Clean

- Before handling birds, wash hands thoroughly with soap, water, and disinfectant.
- Supplies should include water, soap, disinfectant, and brush for cleaning soles of boots; remove manure or mud from surfaces first or disinfectant will not work.
- Keep clean clothes, such as coveralls and boots, in a tub at the entrance to the clean area where your birds are located.
- Always keep bird enclosures and equipment as clean as possible.
- Empty, clean, and disinfect feeders on a regular basis; feed scoops, shovels, rakes, brooms, etc., should all be cleaned and disinfected when they enter and leave the bird area.
- Poultry sales, auctions, or swap meet facilities should be cleaned and disinfected after each event.
- **ALWAYS** wear clean clothing and shoes that have **not** been around the birds when going out in public.



Don't Haul Disease Home



- Always be on the alert to prevent ways of bringing disease to your birds.
- The outside of a feed bag may be contaminated. Empty contents into a sanitized container and discard the bag.
- If your birds have been to a show, fair, or exhibition keep them separate from your other birds in a quarantine area for two weeks after the event and watch for signs of disease.
- New birds for your flock should be kept separated for three weeks to one month in a quarantine area.
- Avoid physical contact with your birds for at least a day after being around other poultry such as birds at auctions, aviaries, and other farms.
- Vehicles should be cleaned after visiting aviaries, auctions, or other farms. Use a pressure washer to especially clean tires and undercarriage; dislodge any dirt. Also, clean interiors with a cloth and disinfectant, because you could have transported disease agent on your hands and feet.

Don't Borrow Disease from Your Neighbor

- Use your own equipment.
- Don't share birds, equipment, or feed with other bird owners.
- If you plan to bring home equipment, clean and disinfect it before bringing it to your property where your birds are located.

Know the Warning Signs for Infectious Diseases

- Poultry sales, auctions, or swap meet organizers should not allow sick birds to enter the sales or swap facility.
- Diseases can be difficult to diagnose, but you can recognize potential problems and contact a veterinarian to diagnose the disease.
- Signs of disease to look for are:
 - Unusual drop in egg production
 - Soft or misshapen eggs
 - Weight loss
 - Sneezing, coughing, gasping for air, nasal discharge
 - Greenish watery diarrhea
 - Listlessness, muscular tremors, drooping wings
 - Twisting of head or neck
 - Complete paralysis
 - Swelling around eyes and neck
 - Lameness and tumors
 - Sudden death or unusual number of birds dying—report immediately!

Report Sick Birds

- Virginia bird owners should report sick birds or unusual bird deaths to the State Veterinarian's Office at 804.692.0601 or at vastatevet@vdacs.virginia.gov. The office will advise you of your next steps.

Helpful Links:

[DEFEND the FLOCK](#)

[Prevent Avian Influenza at Your Farm](#)

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