

Biosecurity for the Birds

Practice Good Biosecurity and Keep Your Birds Healthy!

What Is Biosecurity?

Biosecurity is what you do to reduce the chances of an infectious disease being carried onto your farm or to your backyard by people, animals, equipment, or vehicles, either accidentally or on purpose. Good biosecurity helps keep infectious disease from spreading to your poultry or birds.

What Is Good Biosecurity?

Good, consistent biosecurity practices are the best way to prevent bird diseases like exotic Newcastle disease (END) from spreading in the United States. Materials that carry the END virus can be picked up on shoes and clothing and moved from an area with sick birds to an area with healthy ones. Moving birds from one place to another can also spread diseases, especially because some birds can carry disease without looking sick. By making biosecurity a part of your daily routine while caring for your birds, you decrease the chance of END showing up on your back doorstep.

To help keep your birds healthy:

- Clean clothing is a must. Wear boots that have been properly cleaned and disinfected and coveralls that have been washed in a machine with laundry detergent. Make sure everyone who enters your property wears clean boots and coveralls, too, and washes their hands thoroughly when entering and leaving. Poultry disease viruses are easily spread by the clothing, shoes, and hands of people who come in contact with infected birds.
- Clean and disinfect any lawn, garden, or poultry equipment that may have come in contact with your birds or their droppings before you take it somewhere else. Do the same thing when you bring equipment to your property. All manure must be removed before the disinfectant can work. Disinfectant kills poultry viruses that can remain on surfaces.
- Allow only the people who take care of your birds to come in contact with them. Caretakers should not themselves own commercial, pet, or backyard birds because these birds may serve as a source of disease that can be carried onto your property and spread to your birds. Your caretakers should not attend bird shows or other events where birds are present. Birds at such events may be carrying a disease.
- Do not lend or borrow equipment—it can carry bird disease viruses. If you must lend your equipment to other people, make sure it is cleaned and disinfected when they return it. Disinfectants will work only on surfaces thoroughly cleaned of manure and other material. Things such as wooden pallets or cardboard egg cartons or other porous items cannot be adequately cleaned and disinfected and should not be shared under any circumstances. Tillers or other equipment with motors should be used on only one farm.
- Do not visit other poultry farms or backyards where birds are kept. While attending exhibitions or taking your birds to other locations, keep in mind



that the birds at these locations come from many different farms that may not practice the same level of biosecurity you do. This could be a source of disease for your flock. Be cautious if you do take your birds to a place where they are exposed to birds from other locations. All birds that are taken off of your property should be isolated for 10 days when they are returned. After the 10-day time period, inspect the isolated birds for signs of disease before putting them with the rest of the flock.

- Pet birds, ducks, geese, or other game birds are often carriers of poultry diseases. Keep them away from your poultry. The more birds that come to a location from different places, the greater the risk.
- Be careful how you handle or dispose of dead birds, litter, and manure. For example, place dead birds, litter, or manure in nonpourous containers. Contact local authorities for proper disposal sites.
- Call your veterinarian or local extension agent to examine all of your sick birds or birds that die suddenly, especially if you have been around other people's birds or brought new birds home.

Pet Bird Owners—Beware!

END is a threat to pet birds. Birds that are illegally brought into the United States may spread the END virus because they are not quarantined and tested by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). All bird owners should take the following precautions to avoid a disease outbreak:

- Ask bird suppliers for copies of paperwork that proves their birds are imported into the United States legally or are from U.S. stock, were healthy before being shipped, and were transported in new or thoroughly disinfected containers.
- Keep records of all sales, shipments, and movements of birds.
- Separate all newly purchased birds from older ones for at least 30 days. Examine the new bird, checking it for any sign of disease or illness before introducing it into your aviary.
- When caring for your birds, wear clean coveralls and boots and wash your hands. Care for younger birds first and then older birds, and care for the birds you just purchased last. Do not return to the older birds without putting on fresh, clean coveralls and boots and thoroughly washing your hands with a disinfecting soap.



Knowing What To Look for Is Half the Battle

Bird owners who are familiar with the signs of sick birds are ahead of the game. Being able to recognize any of the following things in your birds puts you a step ahead in preventing END or any other disease from invading your flock.

- Sneezing, gasping for air, nasal discharge, coughing;
- Greenish, watery diarrhea;
- Sudden depression, tremors or uncontrollable shaking, drooping wings, twisting of the head and neck, walking around in circles, or paralysis;
- Sudden drop in egg production;
- Sudden production of thin-shelled or odd-shaped eggs;
- Swelling of the tissues around the eyes and in the neck;
- Sudden death, especially of several or many birds; and
- Any significant decrease in food consumption.



If your birds exhibit any of these signs, it is important that you call your veterinarian or State, Federal, or local agriculture officials immediately.

Additional Information

Additional information on END and other avian diseases can be found on the Web site of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service: <<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs>>.

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