When Disease Enters Your Flock

Sick birds?
Here’s what to do

Get advice from knowledgeable, helpful and trustworthy sources!

These may include:

- A veterinarian
- Alberta Agriculture and Forestry [agriculture.alberta.ca/smallflock]
- University of Alberta [poultry.ualberta.ca]
- Other universities’ poultry extension websites
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) [inspection.gc.ca]
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) [usda.gov]

Visit [agriculture.alberta.ca/smallflock] for disease facts sheets and information about humane euthanasia, carcass disposal and keeping your small flock healthy.

Serious poultry diseases include:

- Avian influenza (AI)
- Infectious laryngotracheitis (ILT)
- Mycoplasma
- Newcastle disease

Learning more about disease prevention and management will help you keep your flock healthy! You can make a big difference by watching for signs of disease in your birds and taking action as quickly as possible.
Signs of sick birds

Watch for changes in your flock

Signs include:
- Reduced activity or movement
- Not eating
- Swelling around the head, neck and eyes
- Coughing, sneezing or gasping
- Tremors or lack of co-ordination
- Decreased egg production
- Gathering near a heat source
- Diarrhea
- Sudden/unexpected death

Some poultry diseases can have a devastating impact, and they must be reported to the province – for monitoring and disease control. If you suspect a reportable disease like ILT, avian influenza or Newcastle disease, contact the Office of Alberta's Chief Provincial Veterinarian at 780-427-3448 (call toll-free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000). After hours call 1-800-524-0051.

What to do when you think your birds are sick

By taking action early, you can:
- More successfully treat birds
- Have fewer deaths
- Prevent spreading disease to other birds or flocks
- Reduce the impact on your flock’s production

If birds die or euthanasia is needed

If birds suddenly die:
- Place carcasses in a sealed bag and refrigerate until you have advice from a veterinarian
- Carcasses in a sealed bag may be frozen if there is a delay in testing

If a bird is suffering, there are several accepted methods of humane euthanasia, including:
- Cervical dislocation and lethal injection with an appropriate veterinary drug administered by a veterinarian

Dispose of carcasses properly if they are not needed for testing
- Proper disposal helps to reduce the spread of disease and odour
- Alberta’s Disposal of Dead Animals Regulation describes the rules for carcass disposal