

About Marek's Disease

Marek's is a highly contagious viral disease and will affect an entire flock. The virus is shed in feather dander and can be transmitted by humans, wind, soil, etc., from flock to flock. At particular risk are birds 8–17 weeks of age. But adult birds can get it, too.

There are neurological, ocular, cutaneous, and visceral forms of Marek's. The neurological form results in a split-leg posture, twisted neck, and drooping wings. The visceral form involves internal tumors, and the ocular version creates irregularities in the eyes. The cutaneous form includes lesions/deformities at feather follicles. There is no cure and no treatment for Marek's. Up to 60% of an unvaccinated flock may die from the disease. There is no risk for humans.

Vaccination for Mareks

The vaccine is derived from a turkey herpes virus and allows the immune system to start building resistance to the virus. Vaccination does **not** prevent the disease or provide immunity. Even if birds have been vaccinated, a new strain/mutation may override the immune system's response. Under-the-skin vaccination is not as effective as in ovo (in-egg) vaccination. Vaccinated birds can still transmit the virus, even if they show no symptoms.

Prevention

The best means of prevention are 1) vaccination and 2) maintaining a closed flock (keeping them under quarantine - not introducing new birds or chicken owners to your flock, unless they have bathed, changed clothes, shoes, etc.).

For More Info on Marek's

http://www.merckmanuals.com/vet/poultry/neoplasms/mareks_disease_in_poultry.html and <http://www.backyardchickens.com/a/the-great-big-giant-mareks-disease-faq>.

About Avian Flu

Avian flu is a highly contagious viral disease that affects domesticated poultry: chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese, quail, pheasants, etc. It is naturally carried by wild waterfowl and shorebirds. The disease will affect an entire flock, which needs to be destroyed. The virus is shed in nasal secretions and fecal matter and is spread from flock to flock by infected birds, people or objects such as cages or feeders. The entire flock is at risk, regardless of age. **This is a reportable disease. If you suspect your flock has avian flu, contact an avian veterinarian immediately.**

There are two forms: severe (highly pathogenic) and mild (low pathogenic). Diagnosis requires laboratory testing. The most common symptoms are depression, lack of appetite, decreased egg production, coughing/sneezing, wet eyes, and fluffed appearance. Note that many of these symptoms also indicate other diseases. The highly pathogenic variety may produce swollen

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comb/wattles, gasping, diarrhea, blue head, bleeding under skin of legs, and high death rate. There is very low risk for humans.

Vaccination for Avian Flu

There is a vaccine currently being developed.

Prevention

The best means of prevention is biosecurity to reduce the potential of coming into contact with infected birds: 1) Limit travel to other flocks. 2) Do not allow visitors who have chickens to access your birds. 3) Keep a dedicated pair of footwear that you use in your coop only. 4) Prevent contact with wild birds. 5) If you must bring in new birds, take them from reputable sources only. 6) Quarantine new birds for 30 days before introducing them to yours.

For More Info on Avian Flu

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/agriculture/poultry/docs/avian-influenza-basics-for-urban-and-backyard-poultry-owners.pdf>

http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/poulsoci/tech_manuals/preventing_avian_influenza_backyard.pdf

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/>

Suggested Tour Precautions

- Allow only those people who have symptom-free flocks to host on the tour.
- Advise guests who own chickens to bathe/wash hands/hair/clothes and clean shoes with a disinfectant solution (see **Disinfectant Solutions**) before and after tour.
- Visitors may not handle hosts' birds.
- Tour hosts clean up poop and keep visitors in designated areas.
- Tour hosts provide disposable shoe covers to guests.
- Have sites provide "shoe bath" with disinfectant solution (see **Disinfectant Solutions**).
- Have a disclaimer indicating that folks participate at their birds' own risk.

Disinfectant Solutions

Bleach*: 1 Tbsp bleach to 1 qt water

Ammonia**: 3.5 ounces per gallon of water

Vinegar**: Undiluted

*Do not mix bleach with other cleaning/disinfecting solutions.

**Not registered as a disinfectant with the EPA and does not kill staphylococcus bacteria.