



Media Release

The Department of Primary Industries

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Managing backyard poultry during virus outbreak

The current outbreak of avian paramyxovirus is still confined to pigeon flocks in Victoria.

The Department of Primary Industries has quarantined a total of 19 properties across the state and so far there are seven confirmed incidents of the disease in Melbourne suburbs and in Shepparton. Results from more samples are pending.

The confirmed cases are in Lalor, Meadow Heights, Thomastown, Reservoir, Hoppers Crossing and Keilor Downs.

Detection of this avian paramyxovirus in poultry would mean an outbreak of Newcastle disease. There is no evidence that this has happened.

Commercial poultry in Victoria are vaccinated against Newcastle disease.

Owners of backyard poultry are unlikely to have vaccinated birds so should minimise the risk of introducing disease by implementing biosecurity measures in their own backyards.

Victoria's Acting Chief Veterinary Officer, Iain McLaren said the most important factor was to prevent contact with other racing, fancy and wild pigeons, both directly and indirectly.

"Ensure your birds are physically separated from other people's or wild birds, including not sharing feed and water," Dr McLaren said.

"Owners should also practise good hygiene if attending bird shows, limiting visitors to your birds, and quarantining new birds on introduction to flocks. A strong detergent will kill the virus on contact."

"Other simple biosecurity measures that will help prevent disease outbreaks include keeping equipment and poultry yards or aviaries clean and preventing contamination of food and water by faeces or other animal waste.

Movements of birds to and from known infected properties are being investigated to determine possible sources of infection and the extent of disease spread.

It is also important that bird owners report any groups of sick or dead birds to their local veterinarian or to the Department of Primary Industries Customer Service Centre on telephone **136 186**.

In rare instances humans can be infected and suffer headache and flu-like symptoms and/or develop mild conjunctivitis which persists for one or two days. Consult your doctor if you develop these symptoms after handling diseased birds.

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