



Paramyxovirus infection in pigeons: Victoria situation report

Date: 27 January 2012 **Time:** 12:00 hrs

Issued by the Victorian Department of Primary Industries for the pigeon and related industries.

Important – Ban of all pigeon gatherings in Victoria

The Minister for Agriculture and Food Security has issued an Order prohibiting the holding of shows, exhibitions, markets, sales, auctions, tossing and racing pigeons anywhere in the State of Victoria. The ban should assist the containment of the disease and is made with the support of the Victorian pigeon industry.

Loft flying may continue. Where several lofts are within a small area, owners are encouraged to coordinate their loft flying to minimise the mixing of their birds. Tired or disorientated birds should be prevented from entering other lofts should they land there.

This ban is in effect for a further **90 days, due to finish on 25 March 2012**. A copy of the Order is available on the DPI website.

Situation Analysis

- There has been one new infected property this week. A total of 66 properties have been infected to date. Of these, 47 have now been resolved. There have been no new cases identified outside of Melbourne.
- There have been five more confirmed or suspect cases of Paramyxovirus 1 (PMV1) in feral pigeons, bringing the total to 57 cases. All cases thus far have occurred in greater metropolitan Melbourne (see map).
- PMV1 has been isolated from the tissues of a sick collared sparrow hawk (*Accipiter cirrocephalus*) – a raptor native to Australia. This is the first time a native species has been detected as infected with PMV1 during the course of this outbreak. PMV1-infected feral pigeons had previously been confirmed in the immediate area (central Melbourne) and it is likely that infection in the sparrow hawk may be the result of high virus challenge associated with recent predation on diseased pigeons. PMV1 spread in native bird populations is considered unlikely but additional sporadic infections may occur as the result of predation.. Overseas, rare infections of PMV-1 in raptor species have been detected as a result of predation on infected pigeons.
- PMV1 has also been confirmed in a spotted turtle dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*) in the Melbourne area. The bird was also seen in close proximity to feral pigeons which had previously been diagnosed as PMV1 positive in late December 2011.
- The last confirmed case of PMV1 occurred on 25 January 2012.
- DPI's activities are focused on releasing cleared properties from quarantine and communicating the extension of the ban, however, new reports of sickness and death in pigeons continue to be investigated.
- Natural infection has not been detected in chickens or any species other than pigeons.

Background

- Since late August 2011, a paramyxovirus not previously reported in Australia has been detected in hobby pigeons on a number of properties in Victoria causing high mortality associated with lethargy, gastrointestinal and neurological signs.

- The virus was confirmed as PMV1 by the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL).

Actions taken in Victoria

- The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) implemented a ban of all pigeon gatherings in September 2011 for 90 days. This ban was subsequently extended and is due to finish on 25 March 2012.
- PMV-1 remains a priority for DPI with the primary objective of identifying the extent of the disease and limiting its spread where possible. DPI will continue to investigate reports of significant unexpected die offs in pigeons (racing, hobby or feral) or other birds. Reports of such events should be made to 1800 657 888.
- Infected properties continue to be quarantined and links to other properties investigated. Movement of infected birds is the principle method by which the disease is spreading.
- Information regarding vaccination is available on the DPI website and should be reviewed prior to immunisation of birds. DPI is supportive of the procedures in place to get an appropriate Australian Pesticides and Veterinary medicines APVMA permit, or registration, to enable the importation of a specific, killed PMV-1 vaccine.
- Information to inform veterinarians, industry and the public about the disease outbreak is being provided by media release, direct contact, the DPI website and email.
- **Suspected cases of paramyxovirus infection should be reported to the DPI by phoning 1800 675 888.**
- **General information regarding the paramyxovirus can be obtained from the DPI website (from www.dpi.vic.gov.au) or phoning 136 186 during business hours.**

The next industry sitrep will be provided on Thursday 2 February 2012. Further sitreps will be released on a weekly basis or in response to a significant change.

Dr Andrew Cameron
Chief Veterinary Officer, Victoria

Attachments:

Map of the currently affected and resolved properties, and suspect and confirmed PMV1 cases in feral pigeons.



