



INFORMATION FOR PIGEON & POULTRY INDUSTRY 6 September 2011

New paramyxovirus in pigeons

Messages – For Pigeon Industry

A paramyxovirus not previously reported in Australia has been detected in hobby pigeons in Victoria and is the likely cause of significant deaths in pigeons interstate. Investigations are underway to determine the source of the disease.

Affected pigeon flocks have experienced high mortality associated with lethargy, gastrointestinal and neurological signs. These may include some or all of the following symptoms: diarrhoea, gasping, coughing, sneezing, and rales. Affected birds may also possibly display tremors, paralysed wings, twisted necks, circling, spasms, and paralysis.

There are currently no reports of illness or deaths occurring in pigeons in South Australia. There are also no reported unusual disease events in Australian commercial or backyard poultry flocks, or in wild birds.

If you notice similar signs or high death rates in your pigeons please confine birds to the premises and either contact your veterinarian or call **Biosecurity SA's Animal Health Hotline on 1800 675 888** so that an investigation into the cause of death can be undertaken. Biosecurity SA may assist with the cost of this investigation.

Owners of birds can also minimise the risk of introducing disease by implementing good biosecurity measures, such as preventing contact with other racing, fancy and wild pigeons, both directly and indirectly, including, for example, via feed and water.

Biosecurity SA **strongly advises** all activities that may risk introduction or spread of disease in pigeons to **cease until further notice**. This includes racing and showing of birds. Biosecurity SA will advise when this recommendation can be lifted.

The National Farm Biosecurity Manual for Poultry Production provides advice on biosecurity standards relevant to all avian industry sectors, and includes information on sound everyday biosecurity practices, and a range of useful resources and links. The document is freely available on the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) website at www.daff.gov.au/birds or hard copies can be obtained by contacting DAFF on (02) 6272 5283.

There currently is no registered vaccine for use in pigeons, although options for vaccination are being explored.



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As virulent paramyxoviruses isolated from pigeons are capable of infecting poultry, producers should reinforce their biosecurity measures to ensure industry's standard biosecurity measures are in place.

As part of these measures, producers should take action to prevent contact between poultry and wild birds or pigeons, both directly and indirectly, for example via feed and water.

Owners of commercial flocks should ensure the currency of Newcastle disease vaccination, and workers should be discouraged from keeping poultry, fancy birds or pet birds, including pigeons.

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If you notice similar signs or high death rates in your flocks please either contact your veterinarian or call Biosecurity SA (BSA) so that an investigation into the cause of death can be undertaken. BSA may assist with the cost of this investigation.

Biosecurity SA can be contacted on 8207 7900 or after hours on the Emergency Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.