

Outbreak of Newcastle disease in commercial poultry flocks, NSW

An outbreak of Newcastle disease (ND) has occurred, involving two commercial poultry flocks in western Sydney (Blacktown and Glenorie) and linked to a third flock at Rylstone 160 km north-west of Sydney.

ND is a highly contagious virus disease affecting poultry, cage and aviary birds, and wild birds. There are a number of strains of the disease, which differ in the severity of their clinical signs, ranging from inapparent to a rapidly fatal condition. In its highly virulent form, ND can rapidly cause up to 100 per cent mortality in bird flocks and poses a devastating threat to the poultry industry. Strains are found in most countries but the virulent form has not previously occurred in Australia.

The virus belongs to the family Paramyxoviridae and causes digestive, respiratory and/or nervous signs in birds.

ND does not present any public health risk to consumers of poultry products, including poultry meat, eggs and other

chicken products. People exposed to high levels of the virus, for example laboratory workers, may experience conjunctivitis and/or mild influenza-like symptoms.

Control measures have been implemented in accordance with the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (Ausvetplan) for ND and include quarantine, surveillance, destruction of poultry, and disinfection of the affected properties. The eradication program is funded jointly by all State and Federal Governments.

More information about Newcastle disease and the outbreak can be found on the NSW Department of Agriculture website at:

<http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au/news/nd/>

and on the website of the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer at:

<http://www.dpie.gov.au/ocvo>.

A pictorial account is at:

<http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au/news/nd/pictures.htm>.

Q fever outbreak in an abattoir in Cooma, NSW

An outbreak of Q fever in workers at an abattoir in Cooma, in the Monaro District of New South Wales, is currently under investigation. To 28 September 1998, out of an estimated workforce of approximately 100, there have been 18 confirmed cases and 12 suspected cases. So far, any suspected cases that have occurred outside the abattoir environment have tested negative. In the majority

of suspected and confirmed cases the clinical onset of disease occurred in late August or the first week of September, 1998. Infected stock from outside the Monaro District have been implicated as the source of the epidemic. A screening and vaccination programme of all abattoir employees has been implemented and is nearing completion.

Revision of the infection control guidelines

The Communicable Diseases Network Australia New Zealand (CDNANZ) is reviewing the current infection control guidelines, *Infection Control in the Health Care Setting: Guidelines for the Prevention of Transmission of Infectious Diseases 1996* and *Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease and Other Human Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies: Guidelines on patient management and infection control 1995*.

These guidelines outline the principles of infection control and provide a rationale against which practitioners and health care establishments can develop detailed protocols and systems for infection control that are relevant to their own area of health care. A constantly changing health care environment requires that the guidelines be reviewed to ensure that they continue to provide best practice technical and ethical information.

A Steering Committee has been established to oversee the review, with scientific and administrative support from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

As part of the review, the Steering Committee is seeking comments from users of the current documents on their utility, and on ways in which they might be improved. To assist the provision of feedback comments, a questionnaire has been developed and is available on the Public Health Division website <http://www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/communica/review/>. The guidelines can also be viewed on this website.

Completed questionnaires and suggestions should be forwarded to the NCDC at the following address by close of business on 13 November 1998:

Email address: icgreview@health.gov.au

Postal address:

Review of Infection Control Guidelines
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