

Detailed guide: Newcastle disease: how to spot and report it

Updated: Contact details for reporting a notifiable disease updated.

Newcastle disease affects chickens and other captive and wild birds.

Humans aren't normally affected, but people in direct contact with infected birds may develop a very short-term eye infection, which passes without treatment.

The disease was last confirmed in Great Britain in 2006.

Newcastle disease is a [notifiable animal disease](#). If you suspect it you must report it immediately by calling the Defra Rural Services Helpline on 03000 200 301. In Wales, contact 0300 303 8268. In Scotland, contact your local [Field Services Office](#). Failure to do so is an offence.

Latest situation

If you keep poultry or birds, you must keep a close watch for, and report, any signs of Newcastle disease.

There's an [increased risk of the disease in the UK](#), with cases reported in 2018 in Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg. You can read our [assessment of the risk](#).

How to spot Newcastle disease

As the disease develops affected birds may show some of the following signs:

- respiratory distress such as gaping beak, coughing, sneezing, gurgling, rattling
- nervous signs characterised by tremors and paralysis and twisting of the neck
- unusually watery faeces (diarrhoea) that are yellowish-green in colour
- depression
- lack of appetite

Affected hens may also suddenly produce fewer eggs. Eggs that are laid may be soft-shelled.

The disease may lead to intense clinical signs, with a sudden onset leading to likely death. Or it may have a lesser affect, with breathing problems and lower egg production the only detectable clinical signs.

How Newcastle disease is spread

The disease is spread by direct contact with bodily fluids of infected birds, especially their faeces.

It can also be spread indirectly through people and objects that have been in contact with infected birds, or their excretions (such as faeces). Objects that can carry the disease include:

- vehicles
- equipment
- clothing
- water and feed

The disease can spread from wild to kept birds. Pigeons may carry [pigeon paramyxovirus](#), which can cause Newcastle disease in kept birds.

Preventing and controlling Newcastle disease

You can help prevent the disease by:

- vaccinating your animals against the disease – talk to your vet for advice
- [practising strict biosecurity](#) on your premises

If you report suspicion of Newcastle disease, APHA vets will investigate.

If the disease is confirmed, the outbreak will be controlled in line with the [contingency plan for exotic notifiable diseases](#) and the control strategy for notifiable avian diseases will be implemented.

Further information on prevention and control

[Controls to prevent disease](#)

[What happens when a notifiable disease is suspected or confirmed](#)

Legislation on Newcastle disease

Newcastle disease is covered by the [Diseases of Poultry \(England\) Order 2003](#).