

WARNING!!!

As advised by the slip-in in last month's magazine a serious avian disease has occurred in pigeons in Victoria. This disease has the potential to spread to other bird species. In some pigeon flocks the mortality rate has been 100%!! Therefore, it is important you take measures to protect your birds in case the disease spreads to South Australia. While primarily aimed at pigeon fanciers, the following flyer from Biosecurity SA contains recommended steps you can take to help protect your birds.

PLEASE TREAT THIS MATTER SERIOUSLY.



Government of South Australia

Biosecurity SA

Biosecurity Advice for all bird owners - Pigeon Paramyxovirus

The new strain of Paramyxovirus has currently been confirmed only in pigeons in Victoria however **a wide range of avian species can potentially be infected with the virus**. All bird owners should take the below actions to help prevent possible infection of their birds.

1. Keep your equipment and poultry yard or aviary clean

- Remove litter, sand and grit from the aviary between batches of birds, and every few months for resident birds
- Thoroughly clean concrete floors, walls and aviary wire with soapy water, and disinfect as needed
- Clean and disinfect feed and water containers regularly; and
- **Don't share equipment with other bird-keepers unless it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.**

2. Avoid contact between your birds and wild birds

- Prevent contact with wild birds by restricting access to open ponds, lakes and creeks—protective netting (**above the aviary**) can also help prevent wild birds from entering domestic bird areas
- Clean up surrounding areas to reduce shelter and hiding places for wild birds; and
- Sick, injured or lost pigeons that arrive at your place should be kept separate from your own birds. Ensure good hygiene to prevent any possible transmission of disease.

3. Don't let feed and water become contaminated by faeces or other animal waste

- Ensure water supplied to poultry is from a chlorinated mains water supply, a microbiologically clean bore, or treated with chlorine if these sources aren't available a
- Don't allow wild birds or pest animals to contaminate your birds' feed - store it in a container with a secure lid.

4. If you go to shows practise good hygiene

See the information below for bird show participants.

5. Limit visitors to your birds

- Restrict access to bird areas
- Ask visitors to put on clean protective clothing and use foot-baths containing appropriate disinfectants to bird areas or (food storage) sheds
- Keep a record of visitors (a guest book).

6. Quarantine new birds

- Separate and monitor new birds for at least 30 days before introducing them to your existing flock
- Always source your birds from a reputable producer (bird dealer) or breeder whose bird health status is known
- Always buy healthy looking birds and avoid buying from markets; and
- Feed and clean quarantined birds **after** you have tended to other birds.

7. Know the signs of paramyxovirus infection

- **In pigeons:** (including aviary native and foreign pigeons and doves)
- Lethargy,
- not wanting to fly
- vomiting white tinged fluid
- circling or head flicking; and
- sudden death (up to 75% of birds with paramyxovirus are dead within 3 days)

- **Signs in other bird species:**

Signs may vary greatly in different species from no clinical signs to severe disease with high mortality. Avian paramyxovirus infection predominantly causes respiratory, gastrointestinal and neurological signs. These may include some or all of the following symptoms: diarrhoea, gasping, coughing, sneezing, tremors, paralysed wings, twisted necks, circling, spasms, and paralysis. A drop in egg production (in poultry) is also commonly seen.

8. Immediately report any sick or dead birds

- If you see any unusual symptoms in your birds, or find that a number of them have died within a short period of time, be on the safe side and report it immediately to your local (avian) veterinarian, or the **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline** on **1800 675 888**. Biosecurity SA may be able to help fund testing to determine a diagnosis.

It is essential that any suspected disease outbreak be reported immediately.

Biosecurity Advice for Bird Show (or Bird Sale) Participants

Biosecurity SA recommends that the showing, racing and grouping of pigeons ceases until further notice.

However, the grouping of any bird species carries the risk of spreading disease. All exhibitors should monitor the current situation regarding paramyxovirus and make their own decision on whether they wish to enter their poultry and aviary birds into a show. Updates of information can be found on the Biosecurity SA website:

<http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecuritysa/animalhealth>

What can bird exhibitors do?

There are a few simple things that stud breeders and exhibitors attending bird shows can do to help prevent the spread of disease.

- Do not take any birds to a show if there are signs of illness in your flock
- All bird equipment and permanent carrying containers should be cleaned and disinfected before and after a show
- While at the show, exhibitors should not handle birds other than their own, but if this

between this is necessary, exhibitors should always thoroughly wash their hands between handling birds

- On returning home, show birds should always undergo a period of quarantine (isolation) before re-introduction to the flock. This quarantine should last for a minimum of 21 days
- Keep a register of all bird movements in and out of your premises, particularly to shows.

What judges should do

Judges should take care to keep their clothing and equipment clean. They should disinfect their hands between handling birds.

What can show organisers do?

Show organisers and club members can also play their part in minimising the risk of passing on infection by:

- Monitoring the current disease situation and immediately cancelling shows if necessary
- Ensuring that all exhibitors at the show are aware of the current situation regarding pigeon paramyxovirus and the need to report any signs of disease in their birds
- Keeping adequate records of exhibitors and birds attending shows and club meetings. This will be essential in aiding trace-back in the event of an outbreak occurring in South Australia
- Where possible, different species should not be on display in the same pavilion - in particular waterfowl should not be in the same area as poultry or other birds
- Inspect to ensure adequate cleaning and disinfection has been performed on cages brought into bird shows
- Minimise handling of birds and access to them by the public (i.e. a 1 metre rope barrier to prevent possible contact with birds)
- Isolate any birds that show signs of being sick
- Consider having a veterinarian present or contactable by telephone on the day(s) of the show
- Report any sick or dead birds immediately to Biosecurity SA and discuss the need to prevent other birds from leaving the show.

Biosecurity SA Emergency Animal Disease Hotline 1800 675 888.

The above information is offered by Biosecurity SA as suggested guidelines.

I have highlighted some important points by substituting red print for the original black; and have added some points (in red brackets) to make the text more relevant to aviary birds, rather than just pigeons.

Editor