

Protecting Birds From Disease Is A Matter Of Biosecurity



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(NAPSA)—Birds are the third most popular pet in the United States behind cats and dogs. While most bird owners take great care to look out for the well-being of their animals, many are not aware of how susceptible their pet parrots and backyard chickens and ducks are to certain diseases like exotic Newcastle disease (END) or avian influenza (AI). These diseases are highly contagious and can spread from bird to bird quickly with devastating results. In recent years, tens of thousands of birds, including both pets and backyard flocks, died in California and other Western states as a result of disease outbreaks.

To help battle these threats, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched a campaign called *Biosecurity for the Birds* to inform people who raise their own poultry or who own exotic birds about the signs associated with these diseases. The campaign is the result of the END outbreak in California and other Western states in 2002 and 2003. This highly contagious and fatal disease cost the states and federal government more than \$180 million to eradicate, and it cost countless bird owners their livelihoods and, in some cases, their pets.

“Biosecurity” means taking the necessary steps to prevent the spread of disease among pets and livestock. USDA is asking bird owners, whether you own exotic birds, have backyard chickens, or maintain pigeon coops, to follow several basic steps to ensure that disease does not spread to your birds.

Three main steps to follow include:

1. Restrict traffic on and off of your property, disinfect shoes, clothes and hands to prevent the

spread of disease, and don't borrow birdcages or tools without completely disinfecting them.

2. Know the signs of disease, such as sudden death of flock members and odd behavior including tremors, drooping wings or lack of movement.

3. If you suspect anything is wrong with your birds, report to your veterinarian, cooperative extension agent, your State veterinarian or USDA by calling 1-866-536-7593.

These steps are especially important to follow if you raise poultry. By making biosecurity part of your daily routine, you decrease the chance of having a disease show up in your birds.

Many bird owners take their animals to fairs or shows where they spend days in close contact with birds from other flocks. Often, when the fair or show is over, owners may place the show birds back in with the rest of their flock. However, it is important to keep your show birds isolated from the rest of your flock for at least 2 weeks before re-introducing them. Also, if you receive new birds, even from hatcheries you have worked with for years, keep the new birds isolated for 30 days from the rest of the flock. This way, if your new or show birds have picked up a disease, you will reduce your chances of infecting the rest of your flock.

You are your birds best protection from disease. If you adopt good habits and practice them on a daily basis, you will reduce the threat of infection to your birds and help protect your neighbors' birds as well.

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