



## Feathered Facts

A  
Baker County  
Extension  
Service  
Newsletter

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Dear Extension Friends,

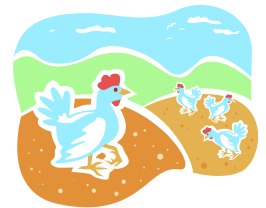
As the weather is getting warmer and days are getting longer, your laying hens should be producing as long as they are mature. Warm weather puts extra strain on the birds so please make sure to provide adequate drinking water and shade to your animals. While disease in your flock can be a constant threat, we typically get more questions over the warmer months, so this issue is targeted at diseases and prevention. As always, if we can help you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Davis, Ph.D.  
Director / Agriculture Agent  
UF | IFAS Baker County Extension Service



## Poultry Diseases—Good Management is Key



As the old saying goes: “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”. Prevention is the best way to deal with disease causing organisms and parasites. Many diseases can be prevented via vaccination and good management. There are also many diseases that cannot be cured after they occur.

Poultry, like all living organisms, tend to perform better in a clean and disease-free environment. Good management of your flock and their environment is key to decrease the chance of disease or parasitic infestation. A regular cleanout schedule for the pen or coop area is recommended as many diseases are transmitted via the feces. Waterers should be cleaned daily by scrubbing and the use of a chlorine bleach solution. Feeders can be cleaned less often, but should be cleaned when they appear soiled.

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# Poultry Diseases

The table below lists some of the more common diseases that can affect poultry. It includes information on the source of the disease, signs / symptoms and prevention and control measures. The list below is not intended to be all inclusive but it can aid in determining the status of the flock and how to combat the disease.

Disease Name / Type	Symptoms	Transmission	Prevention / Control
<b>Botulism (bacterial toxin)</b>	Paralysis beginning at extremities that progresses toward the trunk	Ingestion of toxin with feed or ingestion via decaying plant or animal matter.	Improperly stored feed is the typical culprit, although access to decaying material in wet areas can be the cause. Remove source of the toxin. Administer Epsom salts in the water (1 lb. per 1000 birds) to flush the flock). Expect some mortality.
<b>Fowl Cholera (bacterium)</b>	Greenish-yellow diarrhea, fever, increased water consumption, decreased feed consumption, severe drop in egg production, weight loss.	Typically via feces but can also be in decaying carcasses and soil. Reservoirs include wild birds, raccoons, opossums, dogs, cats and pigs.	Elimination of potential reservoirs, good sanitation. Vaccination is available. Treatment with antibiotics or other drugs is usually ineffective as mortality increases when treatment is stopped.
<b>Infectious Coryza (bacterium)</b>	Acute respiratory infection producing depression, nasal discharge and sneezing. Edema of the face and wattles may also be present along with decreased feed and water consumption.	Transmission is typically from bird-to-bird contact. Also by contamination of feed and water or by inhalation of airborne droplets from infected birds. Birds that recover remain carriers	Vaccination is available. Treatment of infected birds is by antibiotics and sulfa drugs, although sulfa cannot be administered to layers. Infected birds remain carriers.
<b>Fowl Pox (Virus)</b>	There are two types of this disease: 1)Dry pox and 2)Wet pox. <b>Dry pox:</b> small, white foci to wart-like nodules on the skin. These slough off and form scabs before healing. Seen on comb, wattles and earlobes. <b>Wet pox:</b> ulcerative lesions in the oral cavity and respiratory tract. The disease usually runs its course in 3 to 5 weeks. Young birds will have retarded growth while layers will see a drop in production.	Fowl pox can be transmitted by both direct and indirect contact. Sloughed off scabs can carry the virus. Mosquitoes are also a common vector. Birds that recover continue to carry the virus	There is not treatment available for fowl pox. However, the disease is usually slow to spread, so vaccination of an infected flock can stop an outbreak. Vaccination of young birds will prevent the disease. Control of mosquitoes and other potential vectors will aid in prevention.

Disease Name / Type	Symptoms	Transmission	Prevention / Control
<b>Newcastle Disease (Virus)</b>	Respiratory stress, wheezing, nasal discharge, depression, decreased appetite, decreased water consumption and drop in production. Mortality ranges from 10 to 80 percent. Edema in the face is common along with airway congestion.	Incubation period for the virus is 5 to 7 days. During this time, the birds will be contagious and shed the virus. The virus can be transmitted by contaminated fomites and via the air.	There is no specific treatment for this disease. Antibiotics can be administered to prevent secondary infections. Vaccination of the flock, along with good sanitation and biosecurity will aid in prevention.
<b>Infectious Bronchitis (Virus)</b>	Coughing, sneezing, rales, labored breathing accompanied by a watery discharge from the eyes and mouth.	Incubation time is typically 17 to 36 hours with a disease course of 10 to 14 days. The disease can be spread by air over long distances. It can also be spread mechanically and by fomites.	There is no specific treatment for this disease. Antibiotics can be administered for 3 to 5 days to prevent secondary bacterial infections. Vaccination is available for prevention.
<b>Aspergillosis (Fungus)</b>	Aspergillosis can take two forms: 1)acute and 2)chronic. <b>Acute:</b> loss of appetite, gasping, convulsions and sleepiness. Mortality typically ranges from 5 to 20 percent. The acute disease occurs in young birds <b>Chronic:</b> emaciation, loss of appetite, cyanosis, gasping and death. The chronic form occurs in older birds.	This disease is transmitted by inhalation of the fungal spores. Therefore, most infections occur because of contaminated environment, particularly incubation equipment and brooder housing. All types of litter materials have been known to be able to be contaminated. Feed and water should also be suspect when identifying the contamination source.	There is no cure for infected birds. Infected birds should be eradicated. Housing and incubation equipment should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before repopulation. Prevention is attained via good husbandry and sanitation.
<b>Marek's Disease (Virus)</b>	This disease is a type of avian cancer. Tumors can be located in many parts of the body. Tumors in the nervous system can cause lameness and paralysis. Tumors can also be found in the liver, spleen, kidney, pancreas, lungs, muscles and eyes. Those in the eyes cause blindness while the others can cause unthriftiness, paleness and labored breathing. Late stage birds exhibit emaciation, pale, scaly combs and a greenish diarrhea.	Marek's Disease is very similar to Lymphoid Leukosis. However, Marek's Disease typically occurs in chickens from 12 to 25 weeks of age, while Lymphoid Leukosis typically starts at 16 weeks of age. Marek's Disease is viral and is transmitted via the air. Dust, dander, feces and saliva can also be contaminated and serve to spread the disease. Infected birds that survive the disease are considered to be carriers of the virus and can infect susceptible birds.	There is no treatment for Marek's Disease. Vaccination is available for chicks.



# Poultry Diseases—Good Management is Key

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There are different types of diseases that can affect a poultry flock, including contagious diseases and hereditary diseases. There are also nutritional deficiencies that can mimic the signs and symptoms of disease. Many of the contagious diseases that affect poultry flocks can be prevented via vaccination. Make sure to check with your chick or pullet provider to make sure that they have vaccinated the birds against these diseases. Other diseases are considered hereditary diseases. These diseases can be prevented in your flock by using stock that is tested to be disease free. Once again, you should consult with your chick or pullet provider to determine the parent stock of the birds and to check if they are tested to be free of these hereditary diseases. Finally, there are certain nutritional deficiencies that show similar signs/symptoms as contagious or hereditary diseases. Generally, we do not see these types of nutritional deficiencies in flocks that are fed balanced diets. Additional information on flock nutrition was presented in the May issue of this newsletter and can be found at <http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu/FeatheredFacts.html>

There are drugs and antibiotics available to treat certain diseases. However, these drugs only work effectively when given at the recommended dose and for the recommended time period. Random or irregular use of these drugs can result in poor flock health. Drugs and antibiotic use in a flock should be used in conjunction with good management and not as an alternative for it.

Measures, in addition to the ones at the beginning of this article, that you can use to help prevent disease in your flock are listed below. Additional questions about drugs should be directed to a veterinarian:

- Provide adequate ventilation during hot weather.
- Use screening or other methods to keep your birds isolated from other animals and birds. Waterfowl are natural carriers of diseases that can affect poultry. Pests such as insects and rodents can also be carriers of disease.
- Segregate different ages of birds (if possible). Some diseases tend to affect only young birds but can be carried by mature birds.
- Limit visitors to your flock area. Disease causing agents can be transmitted via clothing and shoes.
- Quarantine new or replacement birds for up to 30 days to identify signs and symptoms of disease.
- Eliminate trash or junk piles near the poultry rearing area. These can attract pests and rodents which can carry disease.
- Always be on the lookout for strange behavior in your flock including changes in respiration, wheezing, discharge from the eyes or nasal cavity or bloody droppings. Birds that are sick may display other signs such as an inability to move, trying to hide, weakness, unthriftiness and ruffled feathers.

Using these measures can help you to prevent disease in your flock.



## **Baker County Extension Service**

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**Hours: M—F 8:30am to 5:00pm (Closed Noon to 1:00pm for Lunch)**