Western Canadian Animal Health Network

WECAHN POULTRY NETWORK PRODUCER REPORT

April - June 2025

The WeCAHN Poultry Network convened its quarterly meeting on September 11, 2025 to review poultry health trends in MB, SK, AB and BC from April to June 2025.

Overview

Data sources in this report include:

1. Clinical Impressions Surveys completed by network practitioners.
2. Data shared by western veterinary diagnostic laboratories: Manitoba Veterinary Diagnostic Services (VDS) Laboratory, Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS), and University of Calgary College of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU).
3. Scan: poultry surveillance reported by other sources or networks.

1) Interesting Cases

Case 1: *Erysipelas* in a commercial layer flock (follow up from Q1 2025)

The layer flock, housed in an old broiler breeder barn, experienced high mortality due to *Erysipelas* (a bacterial disease). The barn had several problems - sharp metal edges and exposed wires that caused skin wounds on birds, allowing bacteria to enter.

What was done after the flock finished production:

- The barn was cleaned and disinfected thoroughly.
- Rodent control was improved.
- Equipment was repaired.
- New pullets were vaccinated through their drinking water.

Next steps:

The producer is working with their veterinarian to implement a complete vaccination plan to prevent Erysipelas in the new flock. A turkey vaccine has worked in the U.S., but it isn't approved in Canada yet. Other network veterinarians mentioned an off-label pig vaccine that might help.

Why it matters: This case shows that good barn maintenance and biosecurity are just as important in disease prevention as medication or vaccination.

Case 2: Multidrug-Resistant Bacteria in Broiler Breeder Chicks

A flock of 2-week-old broiler breeder chicks was sick with lameness and had high mortality rates. Lab tests found *E. coli* and *Pseudomonas* bacteria that were resistant to almost all antibiotics — except enrofloxacin.

Key points:

- The eggs came from the U.S., but it wasn't clear where they were hatched.
- Veterinarians commented that they see fewer cases of multidrug resistance now versus 15-20 years ago.
- If *Pseudomonas* are found, vets recommend checking and sanitizing water lines.

Why it matters:

Multidrug resistance makes it harder to treat sick birds. Careful selection of the correct antibiotic is important to maintain efficacy of available drugs.

Case 3: *Salmonella* Enteritidis found in duck balut farm

A duck farm making balut (fertilized duck eggs sold for food) tested positive for *Salmonella* Enteritidis (SE). The birds are housed in old wooden barns, with poor hygiene, and almost no biosecurity. The new owner didn't realize the farm had a past *Salmonella* problem. They want to keep selling balut — cooked, salted, or pickled — and are working with a vet to clean up the operation, develop a biosecurity plan and to vaccinate and medicate the flock.

Concerns:

- Balut production is unregulated; there are no compensation programs in place to support the producers if they decide to depopulate.
- The safety of the balut depends on proper cooking, salting or pickling.
- There have been no known human Salmonella cases linked to balut in Canada.

Why it matters:

This case shows how poor barn design and lack of biosecurity make it difficult to deal with animal diseases that could potentially affect humans. Proper cooking of duck eggs is always a wise idea.

Case 4: Canary Aviary Deaths Linked to Salmonella

A pet bird breeder lost all their canaries (about 350 birds) to *Salmonella* Typhimurium bacteria. The canary room also had a severe red mite infestation, which likely weakened the birds and spread disease. *Salmonella* Typhimurium can make humans sick.

What happened:

- Only the canaries were affected; parrots, budgies, and other birds, all housed in separate rooms, stayed healthy.
- The canaries were treated with antibiotics but did not survive.
- The room was fumigated after all canaries died.

Why it matters:

Even pet birds can spread *Salmonella*. Mite control and hygiene are essential in any bird-keeping setup.

2) Syndromic Surveillance

Clinical impression surveys: Important information

Never; Rarely = 1-2 times per 3 months; Commonly = 1-2 times per month; **Very frequently** = 3+ times per month. Observations from multiple veterinarians are included in the report.

Respiratory system disease

- Illnesses like infectious bronchitis and laryngotracheitis stayed rare and stable.
- Mycoplasma infections were not found in western labs this quarter

Digestive system disease

- In Broilers: Ascites, coccidiosis, and necrotic enteritis were each reported Rarely, to Commonly, and stable. Inclusion body hepatitis (IBH) was reported **Very Frequently** and **stable** to **increasing**.
- In Broiler-breeders: Coccidiosis was reported Rarely to Commonly and **stable** but in layers and in turkeys this condition was reported **Never** to Rarely, and stable.
- In broiler breeders, layers, and turkeys: histomoniasis and IBH mortality was reported **Never** and **stable**.

Laboratory detections of IBH, hepatitis cases and *Enterococcus cecorum* (bacteria known to cause chick mortality and lameness) were common in broilers.

Reproductive system disease

- In broiler breeders, in-lay infection (peritonitis) was reported **Never** to Rarely to Commonly, and **stable**. There were no cases of decrease egg production or abnormal egg shapes due to Infectious Bronchitis virus (IBV).
- In layers, in-lay infection was also reported **Never** to Commonly and **stable**, but IBV affecting egg production was seen Rarely.

Musculoskeletal system disease

- In broilers, lameness due to bacterial (*E. coli , Enterococcus*) was reported Rarely to Commonly to Very frequently and **stable** to **increasing**. Lameness due to viruses or nutrition were each reported **Never** to Rarely and **stable**.
- In Broiler-breeders, lameness due to bacteria (*Staphylococcus*) was reported Commonly to Very frequently and **stable**. No viral or nutritional causes of lameness were reported.
- In layers, osteoporosis was reported **Never** and **stable**.
- In turkeys, reovirus leg inflammation and lameness was reported **Never** to Commonly, and **stable**.

Systemic and other diseases

- In Broilers: Early bacterial infection (≤ 14 days old) was reported Commonly to Very frequently. Yolk sac infections were reported Rarely to Commonly to Very frequently. Other causes of early mortality like treatment failure and mite infestation were reported Rarely to Very frequently. The above conditions were considered **stable**. Late bacterial infection (> 14 days old) was reported Rarely to Commonly and also **stable**.
- In broiler-breeders: Early bacterial infection was reported Rarely to Commonly and **stable** to **increasing**. Yolk sac infections were reported Rarely to Commonly and **stable**. Other causes of early mortality were reported Rarely, and **stable**. Hatchability problems due to disease were seen **Never** to Rarely and **stable**. *Salmonella* isolation was reported **Never** to Commonly and **stable**. Aggression, cannibalism, and feather-picking were reported Rarely and **stable**.
- In layers: Early bacterial infection was reported **Never** to Rarely to Commonly. Yolk sac infections were reported **Never** to Commonly, and **stable** to **increasing**. Other causes of early mortality were reported **Never** to Rarely and **stable**. Aggression and cannibalism were reported Rarely to Commonly and **stable**. A practitioner reported aggression and cannibalism in an organic aviary.
- In turkeys: Early bacterial infections, including yolk sac infections were reported Rarely to Commonly and **decreasing** to **stable**. No other causes of early mortality were reported this quarter. Late bacteral infection was reported Rarely and **decreasing** to **stable**. Round heart was seen Rarely to Commonly and **stable**.
- For all commodities: fowl cholera, fowl pox and salmonellosis were each reported **Never** and **stable**.

Laboratory detections of colibacillosis – *E. coli* infection - were above normal limits for a second quarter in a row. In contrast, the number of *Salmonella* cultures and Marek's disease cases were low this quarter. Avian influenza was detected within previously seen rates (since the outbreak started in 2022)

3) Scan

Avian Influenza update

British Columbia started a new round of wetland sampling to monitor avian flu in wild birds. Results are publicly available (link)

Situation in Canada

- There was a break from HPAI cases in domestic birds between May and September but an early start of the fall HPAI season has lead to cases in most Canadian provinces. (CFIA Investigations and orders).
- The BC ostrich farm owners (from the December 2024 case) are still involved in a legal battle with the CFIA to prevent the culling of their birds. The PCZ is still active.
- August 22. Interview with Dr. Angela Rasmussen, VIDO. LINK
- **Dairy cattle:** No HPAI cases have been detected in Canadian cattle. As of July 28, 5,077 raw (unpasteurized) milk samples have tested negative for HPAI (LINK).

International situation

United States:

- **Poultry:** several US states affected by an early start of HPAI this fall (LINK).
- **Dairy cattle:** :Between May 12 and August 12, 2025, there were three new confirmed cases of HPAI in dairy herds not previously affected in California. The total is 1,078 confirmed cases in 17 states and does not reflect reinfection of farms. (LINK). Caution: USDA information may be delayed due to the US government shutdowns. Recommendation: look for information on individual State's websites.
- **Companion animals:** cats. One cat from San Francisco (CA) became ill with HPAI H5N1 and was euthanized. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an alert to pet owners regarding H5N1 contamination of raw cat food. Since May of 2022, the USDA has reported 145 domestic cats infected with HPAI H5N1.
- **Humans:** no updates since April 2025, USDA numbers remain at 70 cases. (LINK).

Europe

- Several European countries reporting HPAI in wild and domestic birds.(summary of overall HPAI situation):

Other updates

USDA investigation of "multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* illnesses linked to contact with backyard poultry" (Link) As of August 8, 2025, 429 infected people have been reported from 47 states. 76% reported contact with backyard poultry before getting sick. The outbreak strains were linked to four hatcheries.

Producer Takeaways:

Overall, spring and early summer 2025 were stable for poultry health in Western Canada, but a few cases served as strong reminders:

- Keep barns clean and well-maintained.
- Work with your vet on good biosecurity and vaccination plans.
- Responsible antibiotic use remains key to keeping poultry (and people) healthy.
- Avian Influenza is affecting wild birds and poultry in Canada. Maintain strict biosecurity, remain vigilant of signs of illness and know how/who to report suspect cases.

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