Western Canadian Animal Health Network

WECAHN POULTRY NETWORK PRODUCER SUMMARY

April - June 2025

The WeCAHN Poultry Network convened its quarterly meeting on September 11, 2025 to review poultry health trends from April to June 2025. Data sources included Clinical Impressions Surveys completed by network practitioners, data shared by western veterinary diagnostic laboratories: Manitoba Veterinary Diagnostic Services (VDS) laboratory, Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS) laboratory, and University of Calgary College of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU); and a scan of poultry issues reported by other sources.

1) Interesting Cases

Case 1: *Erysipelas* in 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.

After the flock finished production, the barn was cleaned and disinfected thoroughly, rodent control was improved, equipment was repaired, and the new flock of pullets was vaccinated through their drinking water. The producer is working with their veterinarian to complete an Erysipelas vaccination plan, but finding the best vaccine option has been difficult.

Tip: keeping up with barn repairs and rodent control is key to prevent bird diseases.

Case 2: Multidrug-Resistant (MDR) 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. The eggs came from the U.S., but it wasn't clear where they were hatched. In general, veterinarians see fewer cases of MDR bacteria now versus 15-20 years ago, however, MDR makes it harder to treat sick birds. Careful selection of the correct antibiotic is critical to maintain efficacy of available drugs.

Tip: If *Pseudomonas* are found, vets recommend checking and sanitizing water lines.

Case 3: *Salmonella* Enteritidis (SE) found in duck balut farm

A duck farm making balut (fertilized duck eggs sold as food) tested positive for SE. The birds are housed in old wooden barns, with poor hygiene and 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 veterinarian to clean up the farm, develop a biosecurity plan and to vaccinate and medicate the flock. Balut production is unregulated, leaving producers without compensation, so depopulation is a last resource. There have been no known human *Salmonella* cases linked to balut in Canada; the safety of the balut depends on proper cooking, salting or pickling.

Tip: Proper cooking of duck eggs is always a wise idea.

Case 4: Canary Aviary Deaths Linked to *Salmonella* Typhimurium (ST)

A pet bird breeder lost all their 350 canaries to ST bacteria. The canary room also had a severe red mite infestation, which likely weakened the birds and spread disease. 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.

Tip: Even pet birds can spread Salmonella that can make humans sick. Mite control and hygiene are essential in any bird-keeping setup.

2) Syndromic Surveillance

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

Digestive diseases like Inclusion Body Hepatitis (IBH) and hepatitis cases were common in broilers. *Enterococcus cecorum* (bacteria known to cause chick mortality and lameness) was also found in broilers.

Reproductive problems in layer flocks included bacterial peritonitis (infection in the body cavity), but levels stayed stable. Egg production issues linked to IBV (infectious bronchitis virus) were rare.

Lameness and leg problems caused by bcateria like E. coli, Enterococcus, or Staphylococcus were seen regularly. Viral lameness and leg inflammation (Reovirus) was reported in turkeys. Nutritional and developmental leg issues stayed low.

Systemic and other diseases such as E. coli and Staphylococcus infections were more common than expected in several labs. Colibacillosis (E. coli septicemia) increased for the second quarter in a row. Marek's disease cases were very low. Avian influenza detections were within previously seen rates (since the outbreaks started in 2022).

3) Scan

Avian Influenza update

Canada:

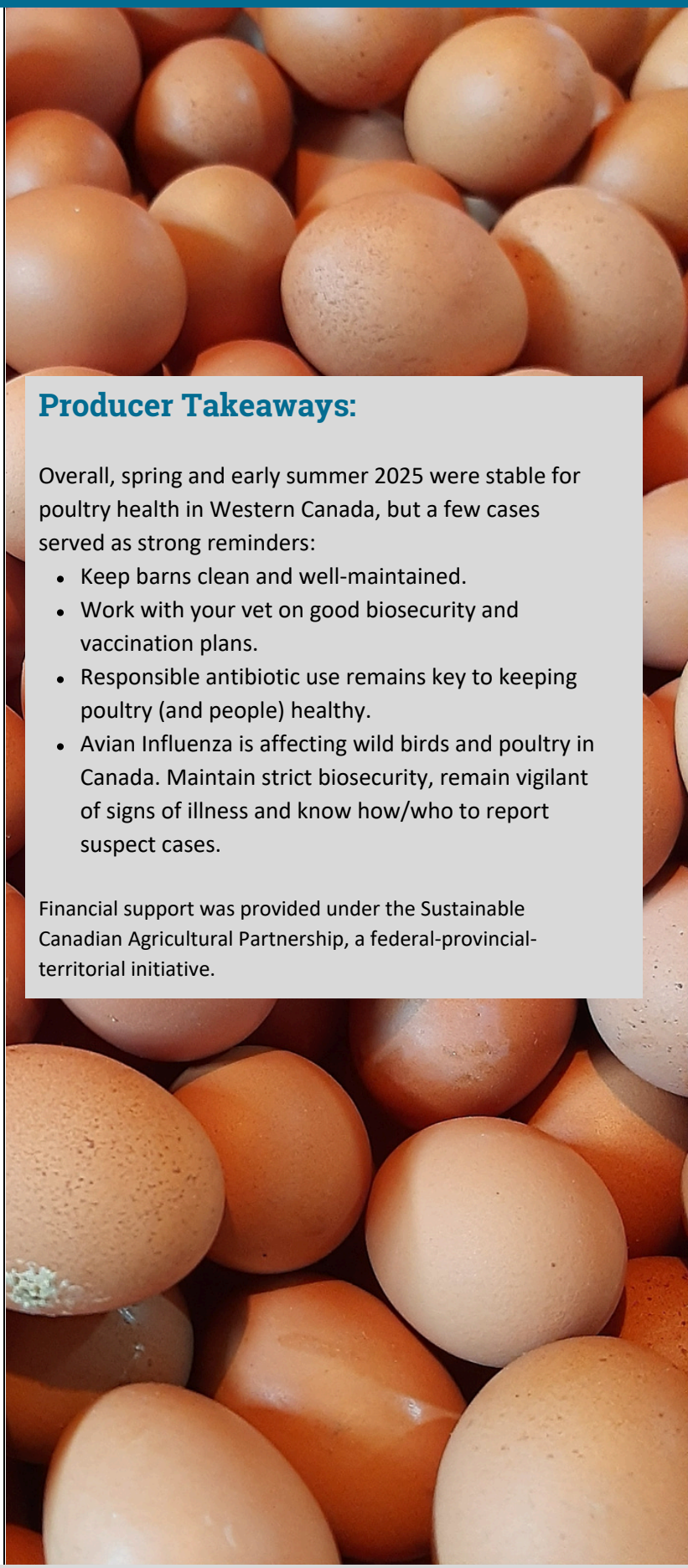
- There was a break from HPAI detections in domestic flocks between May and September 2025, but an early start of the HPAI fall season has lead to cases in most Canadian provinces. (CFIA Investigations and orders).
- The ostrich farm case in B.C. (from 2024) is still in legal dispute with CFIA. August 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 been tested negative for HPAI (LINK).
- British Columbia started a new round of wetland sampling to monitor avian flu in wild birds. Results are publicly available (link)

International

- Poultry: several US states affected by an early start of HPAI this fall (LINK).
- Dairy cattle outbreaks continue in the US. The total is 1,078 herds in 17 states (LINK).
- domestic cats infected: a total of 145 in the US since 2022, some linked to raw cat food.
- No updates on human HPAI cases since April 2025. USDA numbers remain at 70 cases) (LINK).
- HPAI remains active in wild and domestic birds across Europe.

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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