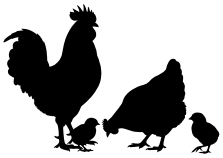
Western Canadian Animal Health Network

# WECAHN POULTRY NETWORK PRODUCER SUMMARY

JANUARY- MARCH 2026

*The WeCAHN Poultry network held a quarterly virtual meeting on May 28th, 2026. Network members discussed the animal health events from January to March, 2026. Veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, public veterinarians, researchers, and industry representatives attended the meeting. Data sources include: 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 Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU); and scan of poultry surveillance reported by other sources.*



## 1) Interesting Cases

### Severe muscle disease in commercial turkeys

A commercial RWA turkey farm in British Columbia experienced repeated outbreaks with high mortality in birds 8–11 weeks of age. Affected birds developed severe muscle disease including gas formation in the breast and thigh muscles, while the skin remained normal. Laboratory testing identified *Clostridium septicum*. Repeated outbreaks and failed antimicrobial treatment suggest that litter management and stocking density may have contributed. No poultry vaccine is available.

### Skin disease in commercial laying hens

Flightiness and high mortality occurred in laying hens on farms in Saskatchewan and Alberta, with feather loss, skin wounds, and, in one flock, a bloodstream infection. Laboratory testing confirmed the emerging bacterium *Staphylococcus agnetis*. Spray application of a skin disinfecting solution to affected birds helped heal skin wounds. Management changes to reduce stress and improve flock health helped lower mortality. Research is continuing to better understand the bacteria and factors that increase the risks of infection.

## 2) Syndromic Surveillance

Respiratory disease remained stable across most poultry flocks. *Mycoplasma* continued to be the main respiratory disease in small flocks but was absent in commercial flocks. Infectious bronchitis and infectious laryngotracheitis (ILT) remained uncommon. Laboratory detections of *Mycoplasma* remained within expected levels, although inclusion body hepatitis (IBH) continued its overall increasing trend.

Digestive diseases remained generally stable, although IBH increased in broilers. *Enterococcus cecorum* remained the most common bacterial finding, while *E. coli* and *Clostridium perfringens* (cause of necrotic enteritis) remained within expected levels.

Reproductive problems were mainly related to bacterial infections, with bloodstream infections in broiler-breeders and salpingitis/peritonitis in layers increasing. Laboratory findings included occasional detections of *E. coli* and *Enterococcus faecium*.

Bacterial lameness remained common and was increasing in broilers and broiler-breeders, while other causes of lameness remained uncommon. Laboratory diagnoses showed osteomyelitis above expected levels.

Yolk sac infections and bacterial infections remained stable to increasing across poultry sectors. Laboratory detections of *Staphylococcus saprophyticus*, *E. coli*, and *Salmonella* remained within expected levels, while influenza A (H5) continued to be detected in wild waterfowl.

## 3) Poultry Condemnations for Federally Inspected Plants

Condemnation data from processing plants should be interpreted with caution because inspection decisions and condemnation categories can vary. WeCAHN will continue to monitor these data to identify long-term trends.

Abdominal edema condemnations continued to increase in Saskatchewan/Manitoba and Alberta and while remaining lower in British Columbia. Condemnations for severely underweight birds increased in AB but remained uncommon elsewhere, although BC has historically reported higher levels. Skin-related condemnations continued to increase across Western Canada, and liver-related condemnations remained highest in BC while increasing in SK/MB.

## 4) Scan of Emerging and Important Diseases

A chronic MG infection was detected on a non-quota commercial poultry farm in Quebec during the investigation of low-level mortality with few clinical signs.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) continues to affect poultry and wildlife in North America. Between mid-April and mid-May, Canada confirmed infections on 10 poultry farms in Alberta and Saskatchewan, while no infections were detected in Canadian dairy cattle. In the United States, H5N1 continued to spread in dairy cattle and poultry, and Europe reported declining activity overall except for increasing outbreaks in Poland.

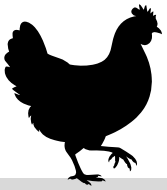
A multistate *Salmonella* outbreak in the United States was linked to contact with backyard poultry, particularly ducks. Investigators traced the outbreak to birds purchased from agricultural retail stores supplied by five hatcheries.

New World screwworm continues to spread in Mexico, and recent detections in Texas and New Mexico have resulted in livestock import restrictions.

Newcastle disease outbreaks are increasing in vaccinated commercial poultry flocks in parts of Europe. Experts continue to investigate possible causes, including vaccine performance, biosecurity, and virus changes. New outbreaks were reported in Spain and Poland.

## 5) Other Network Updates

Manitoba will begin a highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) vaccine trial in August 2026 on a commercial layer flock that will be monitored throughout its production cycle. A second phase evaluating the vaccine in turkey flocks is planned for 2027.



## Producer Takeaways

1. A serious *Clostridium septicum* muscle infection caused repeated turkey losses over multiple growing cycles on the same farm. Good litter management, appropriate stocking density, and early investigation of unusual mortality are important because there is no vaccine and treatment has limited success.
2. An emerging *Staphylococcus agnetis* infection caused severe skin wounds, feather loss, unusual flightiness and blood infections in laying hens. Washing lesions, reducing stress, and improving flock hygiene can help lower risk.
3. Most poultry diseases remained at expected levels, but producers should continue watching for inclusion body hepatitis, bacterial lameness, and bacterial infections in breeders and layers, and investigate increases in mortality or lameness promptly.
4. Avian influenza (H5N1) continues to circulate in poultry and wild birds in Western Canada. Remain vigilant. The New World Screwworm continued to spread through Mexico and reached the Southern US. Learn to identify signs of infection to act quickly.

Financial support was provided under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.