



The WeCAHN Smallholders Network held a quarterly videoconference meeting 20th September 2024 to discuss the animal health events occurring April to June 2024, with veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, researchers, and industry representatives in attendance.

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1. Dataset Overview

Data sources in this report include:

- i. Clinical Impressions Surveys completed by network practitioners.
- ii. Data shared by western veterinary diagnostic laboratories: Manitoba Veterinary Services Diagnostic Laboratory (VSDL), Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS), and University of Calgary College of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU).

2. Interesting Cases

i. *Salmonella* outbreaks in humans linked to contact with small flocks in the US in 2024

Background: Between May 23 and August 29, 409 illnesses, 102 hospitalizations and no deaths were identified in 45 states. ([LINK](#))



- Backyard poultry can carry *Salmonella* even if they look healthy and clean

ii. Avian metapneumovirus outbreaks have been detected in commercial flocks

Background:

- 1st detected in turkey flocks in April 2024 in Ontario ([LINK](#) to report) and in May in Manitoba ([LINK](#) to CFIA website)
- Assumed highly contagious
- Clinical signs: fluid from the eyes and nose, red and frothy eyes, swollen head, head tilt, drop in egg production and egg quality

iii. *Salmonella enteritidis* (SE) cases

- 4 cases of SE in commercial poultry
- Smaller capacity hatcheries where there is a mixing of broiler and laying hens may be a hazard for the spread of *Salmonella enteritidis*. Reducing the risk of *Salmonella enteritidis* relies on the separation of broilers and laying hens, biosecurity measures during slaughter, and properly cooking meat as recommended by Health Canada ([LINK](#)).



- There was a butchering how-to developed by the Ontario Poultry Industry Council ([LINK](#) to euthanasia resources and training materials).

Update on the BC Poultry Health Network ([LINK](#))

A 2-year small flock extension services project in BC, and currently in the 2nd year. The goal is to support “the development of a communications network of poultry owners.” The project has supported on-site poultry workshops, euthanasia training, video and infographics production, and webinars (e.g., “Ask a poultry vet”).

Update on the Manitoba smallholder webinar series

Their goal is to make a better connection with owners/farmers. The project generated presentations on health, nutrition, biosecurity, and euthanasia. They are working on more technical one-pagers as well as posting short versions of their presentations on their YouTube channel. There is a section on smallholder poultry ([LINK](#)) and information for pig production ([LINK](#)) on the Manitoba government website. The leads would like to create a more dedicated network similar to the BC Poultry Health Network.

Subsidized diagnostic tests and exams

- **BC:** The [Disease Detection Program for Smallholders](#) provides subsidized post-mortem examinations for small flocks and small herds of poultry, pigs, sheep and goats in BC.
- **AB:** The [Non-quota or non-commercial poultry investigations program](#) offers subsidized testing for *Salmonella*, Newcastle disease, avian influenza and ILT.
- **SK:** There are a few programs for smallholders in SK. The [Small Holder Swine Health Surveillance Program](#) and the [Saskatchewan Small Flock Poultry Surveillance Program](#) provide subsidized post-mortem examination, histopathology and other testing deemed necessary by the

pathologist. There is also the disease investigation program ([WCVM Disease Investigation Unit](#)).

- **MB:** The [Small Flock Avian Influenza Program](#) provides subsidized post-mortem examinations and free diagnostic testing for certain tests: avian influenza, infectious laryngotracheitis virus and other diagnostic tests deemed necessary by the pathologist.
- Sample submission: In the provinces of BC, AB, and SK, producers can submit animals/samples for testing to laboratories. In MB, the veterinarian must submit the animals/samples.
- The Provincial Premises Identification (PID) number ([WeCAHN smallholders webpage](#)) must be included in the submission in AB and should be included in the submissions in SK and MB.

Provincial updates

BC: Over the past year, the pathologists at the Animal Health Center in BC had helped almost 100 clients across BC under this program. The program provides subsidized postmortem exams for any premises with under 100 livestock and poultry. The program also covers courier fees for sample shipping from outside the Fraser Valley.

More information about the Disease Detection Program for Smallholders can be found [here](#).

AB: More information about the Non-quota or non-commercial poultry investigations program can be found [here](#).

SK: More information about the Small Holder Swine Health Surveillance Program and the Saskatchewan Small Flock Poultry Surveillance Program can be found [here](#) and [here](#), respectively.

MB: More information about the Small Flock

Avian Influenza Program can be found [here](#).

Avian influenza A(H5N1)

Avian influenza A(H5N1) is reportable in Canada. If you are suspicious of avian influenza in your small herds and small flocks, please contact your veterinarian immediately.

In cattle, they may have the following clinical signs:

- Decreased feed intake with a simultaneous decrease in rumination and rumen motility
- Respiratory signs, including clear nasal discharge
- Sudden and significant decrease in milk production
- Colostrum-like consistency of milk in 1 or more quarters
- Dry manure or diarrhea
- Lethargy
- Dehydration
- Fever

Influenza in small flocks: steps to protect the small flock owner ([LINK](#)).

AVMA free guide “Small Farm Preparedness” ([LINK](#))

Meeting takeaways:

- 1) Backyard poultry can carry **Salmonella** even if they look healthy and clean.
- 2) Avian metapneumovirus outbreaks have been detected in commercial broiler and turkey flocks. It is considered highly contagious.
- 3) There are multiple smallholder extension programs available for small flock and small herd owners: [BC Poultry Health Network](#) and MB Smallholder extension projects ([swine](#) and [poultry](#))



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