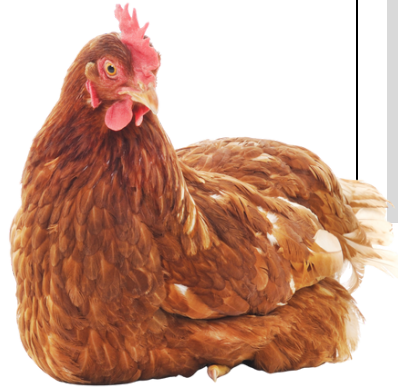




The Western Canadian Animal Health Network (WeCAHN) Smallholder Network held a quarterly videoconference meeting on September 19th, 2025. The network members discussed animal health events from April to June 2025. Veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, researchers, and industry representatives attended the meeting.



1) Overview

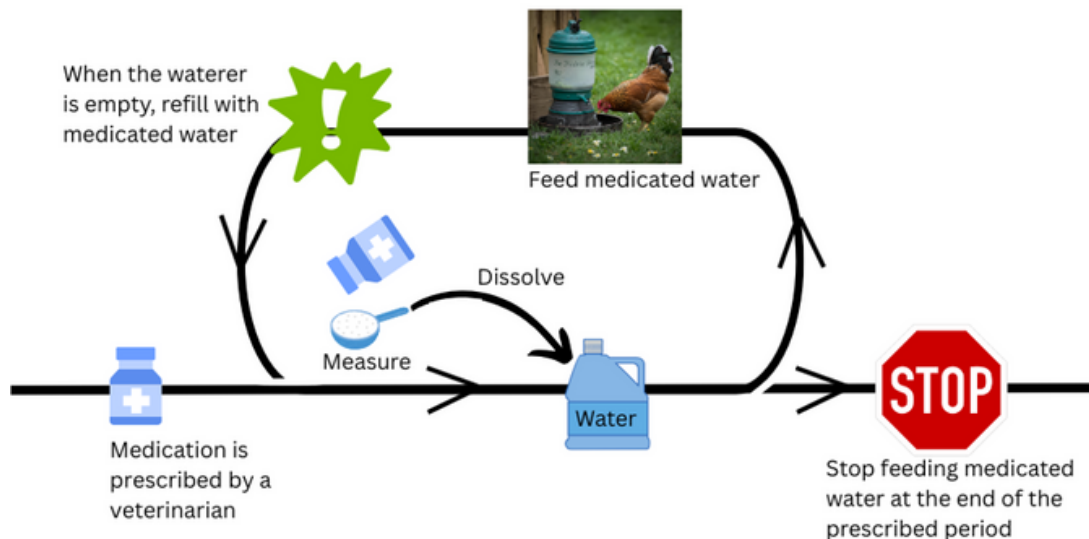
Data sources in this report include:

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

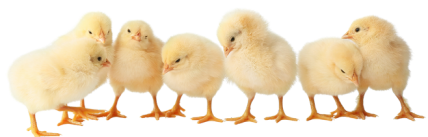
2) Interesting cases

i) Unclear communication resulted in sick hens.

- **History:** A flock owner contacted a veterinarian with concerns of multiple deaths. During the consultation, the owners also mentioned relocation plans and requested deworming treatment.
- **Post-mortem examination:** Three hens were submitted for laboratory examination. One had peritonitis (infection of the body cavity), another coccidiosis, and the 3rd one Marek's disease.
- **Treatment:** Two treatments were prescribed: a treatment for coccidiosis, identified as the most immediate concern, and a dewormer, intended for administration one week before relocation. The veterinarian reviewed both prescriptions and provided an informational handout.
 - Example of the instructions for preparing medicated water: Dissolve the drug in one gallon of water and offer this solution free choice. Each time the medicated gallon is consumed, prepare a fresh gallon with the exact dosage to ensure continuous access during the prescribed period.



- **Implementation and follow-up:** The medications were prepared in separate gallons of water and offered to the hens. After the medicated water was consumed, it was replaced with fresh water.
- The following day, the producer contacted the veterinarian because the hens were inactive (“dull”) and had ceased egg production.
- **Identified communication gaps:** Three issues were noted during follow-up:
 - Water had been withheld before offering the medicated water. This step was not required. Hens benefit from having continuous access to clean, fresh water.
 - Both medications were administered simultaneously. While the dewormer was intended for use closer to the move, the exact relocation timing was not confirmed during the initial consultation.
 - After the medicated gallon was consumed, fresh water was provided instead of a new medicated solution, interrupting the treatment.
- **Outcome and Considerations:** The hens’ dullness and reduced egg production may have been linked to limited water access and incomplete medication delivery.
- This case serves as a reminder of the importance of confirming treatment timing, keeping medicated water available without interruption, and maintaining clear communication between animal owners and veterinarians.



ii) *E. coli* in young broiler-breeders

- Two-week-old broiler-breeders had multidrug-resistant *E. coli*. Though less common than in past decades, these infections still occur, especially in the first week post-hatch.
- With timely treatment, the flock recovered. With any increase in mortality in young flocks, contact your veterinarian to discuss treatment options, as supporting chicks from day one helps prevent setbacks and ensures strong, productive flocks.

iii) Responding to SE in a duck balut operation

- *Salmonella* Enteritidis (SE) was detected in a duck balut farm under new ownership. Because duck balut is not a regulated industry, there is no compensation for depopulated flocks.
- The producer expressed interest in improving biosecurity, cleaning, treating the flock with antibiotics, and vaccination. In the meantime, balut sales continue under proper labelling to cook the balut before consumption.



iv) Healthy lambs, productive future

- One-month old lambs from a start-up flock of 20 ewes experienced sudden neurological illness and death. While two lambs recovered with treatment, the suspected causes (e.g., thiamine deficiency) emphasize the need for close attention to nutrition and husbandry. Before expanding any flock or herd, it is important to address underlying risks to animal health and welfare.

v) Water deprivation and neurological illness in sheep

- A sheep flock experienced weekly losses with circling and stargazing. The sheep were initially treated for listeriosis, a deadly infection caused by bacteria found in spoiled feed, without success. Lab examinations of the brain diagnosed salt toxicity or water deprivation.
- Sheep without reliable water access can develop illnesses that mimic other conditions. Veterinary assessment and laboratory testing are essential for accurate diagnosis and treatment.

3) Syndromic Surveillance

Important information on clinical impression surveys and graphs:

Clinical impression surveys

Never

Rarely = 1-2 times per 3 months

Commonly = 1-2 times per month

Very frequently = 3+ times per month



Small poultry flocks

Clinical impression surveys for small poultry flocks

Early mortality due to bacterial infection was reported **Never** to **Rarely** to **Commonly**, and relative to the prior quarter, the frequency of diagnosis was **decreasing** to **stable**.

Early mortality due to other causes was reported **Never** to **Rarely** to **Commonly**, and **decreasing** to **stable**.

Laboratory diagnoses for small poultry flocks

At the Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS) laboratory, small flock submissions included two chicken necropsies: one without a diagnosis and another with omphalitis and septicemia. These were tested for Influenza A; they were negative.

At the University of Calgary Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU), one chicken was diagnosed with *E. coli* pneumonia.

Over the past two quarters, the number of *E. coli* disease cases in commercial poultry submitted to PDS has been higher than usual. This trend was not noted at VDS and UCVM DSU.

Small herds or flocks of small ruminants

Laboratory diagnoses

At PDS, a companion goat was positive for *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis*.

At UCVM DSU, a 3-month-old pet goat was underweight and diagnosed with coccidiosis and copper toxicity.

In commercial goats, abortions of unknown cause were higher than previously recorded at PDS. In commercial sheep, there were two abortions of unknown cause.

4) Scan

- Alberta [Non-quota or non-commercial \(NQ/NC\) poultry disease investigations program](#) top two diagnoses in poultry were Marek's disease and colibacillosis (*E. coli* disease).
- New Canadian publication: Ewe litter size and lamb birth weight: Effects on lamb health, performance, and carcass traits. Van Donkersgoed, 2025. [The Canadian Veterinary Journal](#)
 - A litter size of two lambs is the most sustainable and economical long-term.
- The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and their partners completed their investigation of multistate *Salmonella* outbreaks ([CDC Investigation Update: Salmonella Outbreak, May 2025](#)).
 - "Of the 385 people with information about animal contact, 264 (69%) reported contact with backyard poultry before getting sick."
- First reported cases of lumpy skin disease (LSD, a pox virus closely related to sheep and goat pox) in Italy ([World Organisation for Animal Health \(WOAH\) World Animal Health Information System \(WAHIS\)](#)), France ([WOAH WAHIS](#)) and Spain ([WOAH WAHIS](#)). Outbreaks were confirmed on June 21st, June 26th, and October 3rd, respectively.
 - Canada applied import restrictions to Italy on May 23 and France on May 26th ([LINK](#)).
 - [CFIA Fact Sheet on LSD](#).

- The highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) of concern is influenza A virus subtype H5N1 genotypes B3.13 and D1.1 in dairy cows. H5N1 genotypes D1.1 and D1.2 are currently the most prevalent in domestic and wild birds in North America.

USA:

- **Dairy cattle:**

- Between September 3rd and October 3rd, 2025, there was one new confirmed case of HPAI in a dairy herd in Nebraska. The total is 1,080 confirmed cases in 18 states ([LINK](#)).

- **Poultry:**

- Between September 3rd and October 3rd, 2025, there were 23 commercial flocks and eight small flocks with confirmed HPAI in multiple states ([LINK](#)).

Canada:

- **Dairy cattle:**

- No HPAI has been detected in Canadian cattle.
- As of September 5th, 2025, the CFIA laboratories tested 5,602 raw (unpasteurized) milk samples at processing plants; all samples were negative for HPAI ([LINK](#)).
- CFIA released: [“Advisory: U.S. agricultural exhibitions precautions to protect Canadian cattle from highly pathogenic avian influenza \(HPAI\)”](#)

- **Poultry:**

- Between September 8th and October 3rd, there were seven commercial HPAI influenza A-infected premises in Alberta (5), Saskatchewan (1) and Quebec (1) ([CFIA Investigations and orders](#)).
- The latest non-commercial poultry detections of HPAI were in May in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Prince Edward Island.
- HPAI infection in an ostrich farm in BC was confirmed in December 2024. The farm owners have been involved in a legal battle with the CFIA to prevent the culling of their birds.
 - August 22nd interview with Dr. Rasmussen [LINK](#)

5) Takeaways:

1. A recent case showed how miscommunication can affect treatment success. If something isn't clear, ask for clarification. It's always better to speak up than risk a mistake that could affect your animals.
2. Building a strong foundation in animal husbandry, like clean housing, balanced nutrition, and early colostrum for newborns, is necessary before expanding your flock or herd. These basics go a long way in preventing issues and setting your animals up for healthy, productive growth.
3. With wild birds migrating this fall, watch for signs of bird flu. Protect your flock by preventing contact with wild birds. [CFIA webpage “Protect your flock from bird flu”](#)

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

