



The WeCAHN Smallholder Network held a quarterly videoconference meeting on March 7th, 2025, to discuss the animal health events occurring from October to December 2024, with veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, researchers, and industry representatives in attendance.

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 Services Diagnostic (VDS) Laboratory, Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS), and University of Calgary College of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU).
3. Scan: smallholder surveillance reported by other sources of networks.



Interesting cases

1) Cache Valley Virus (CVV)

was diagnosed in commercial and small flocks of sheep in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta in late 2024 and early January 2025. There were no detections in BC.

- One case in Alberta was a small flock breeding with 30 Rideau base ewes bred in July. Ten ewes had CVV-affected lambs. The two lambs had malformations of the spinal column and joints and abnormally shaped heads.
- Mosquitoes transmit CVV. Synchronizing breeding to avoid high mosquito seasons can help prevent CVV outbreaks



2) Listeriosis in small flock of sheep

- **General history:** Five flocks of sheep and goats were affected from Q2 2024 to Q1 2025. Listeriosis was previously diagnosed approximately 5 years ago. Generally, it is a sporadic diagnosis.
- **Presentation:** Animals were recumbent and paddling or dead.
- The Western veterinary practitioners at the WeCAHN Small Ruminant Network meeting Q4 2024 did not note a change in listeriosis diagnosis frequency.



3) MG (*Mycoplasma gallisepticum*) and infectious coryza (*Avibacterium paragallinarum*) in small flocks of layers

- Two flocks in Q4 2024 and a third flock in Q1 2025 were infected with both bacteria. The three affected flocks had sourced birds from multiple sites.
- **Diagnoses:** The veterinarian diagnosed a mixed infection in these flocks of laying hens. They had foul breath (infectious coryza), decreased egg production and trouble breathing (MG). The birds also had mites.
- It is not always necessary to depopulate these flocks. If the hens are used for egg production and not breeding, they can be maintained in good health and carry out all-in-all-out at the end of their lifespan.



Syndromic Surveillance

Important information:

Clinical impression surveys

Network practitioners complete a survey which captures whether they have identified selected conditions

- **Never**
- **Rarely** (1-2 times over the 3 months)
- **Commonly** (1-2 times per month)
- **Very frequently** (3+ times per month)

Small poultry flocks

Clinical impression surveys for small poultry flocks

The results below combine the responses to the WeCAHN Smallholders – Small Flock clinical impression survey and the WeCAHN Poultry – Small Flock clinical impression survey.

Infectious laryngotracheitis (ILT) was reported **Never** (3/5) to **Rarely** (2/5). The frequency of diagnosis was reported **decreasing** (1/5) to **stable** (4/5).

Diagnosis of ILT in small flocks of poultry does not require depopulation in the western provinces

The response to ILT in small flocks of poultry varies per province. A summary of the responses is listed in the table below:

Province	Provincial regulations	Response to ILT in a small poultry flock	Recommendation(s) to small flock owners
Manitoba	Reportable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flock vet or Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) staff perform a premises evaluation. • Highly encourage depopulation. • Vaccinate with TCO ILT vaccine, if not too close to a commercial farm. • Lifetime quarantine. 	Vaccinate yearly while under quarantine.
Saskatchewan	Notifiable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response. 	Information to owners or their vet upon request.
Alberta	Reportable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVO staff consult via telephone. • Send a notification to commercial and small poultry flocks within 20 km of the positive flock using the premises identification (PID) system. Share an ILT fact sheet. • Vaccinate with tissue culture origin (TCO) ILT vaccine and booster 4 weeks later. • The owners/producers can choose to depopulate the flock, but there will be no compensation. 	Apply biosecurity protocols—training on cleaning and disinfection.
British Columbia	Reportable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaccinate immediately in the face of an outbreak. 	Maintain as a closed flock. Vaccinate yearly.

Mycoplasma spp. infection was reported **Never** (3/5) to **Commonly** (1/5) to **Very frequently** (1/5). The frequency of diagnosis was reported decreasing (1/5) to stable (4/5).

Small flocks of small ruminants

Laboratory diagnoses for small flocks of small ruminants

A case of companion goats was positive for *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies paratuberculosis (MAP or Johne's disease); this case had 10 individual animals tested, and 60 % were positive. A Polled Dorset 3-year-old ewe of an unknown commodity was diagnosed with Johne's on post-mortem evaluation.

Small herds of swine

Clinical impression surveys for small herds of swine

Neonatal diarrhea was reported **Never** (1/2) to **Rarely** (1/2).

Neurologic disease and **septicemia** were reported **Never** (1/2) to **Rarely** (1/2).



Scan

1) Alberta Non-quota or non-commercial poultry disease investigations: 13 cases were submitted: producers (2) and vets (11)

- **Chicken:** ILT, Marek's disease, Mycoplasmosis (MG/*Mycoplasma synoviae*), gizzard hemorrhages
- **Turkey:** Mycoplasmosis (MG)
- **Pigeon from a small flock:** Vitamin A deficiency and urinary tract bacterial infection
- A chicken, turkey and duck from a farm were emaciated.

2) Manitoba Agriculture updates

- Manitoba Agriculture held a Small Holder Euthanasia workshop for swine on February 26th, 2025. The workshop was delivered by Dr. Jennifer Woods, Livestock Handling and Care Specialist (J Woods Livestock Services).
- Looking at having a dedicated website for smallholder materials.
- Examining future course topics, including emergency training, planning for emergencies (e.g., floods and fire), and nutrition.

3) The BC Poultry Health Network

held a small flock euthanasia workshop for owners of small flocks approximately 2 weeks ago. They had the participants practice euthanasia techniques. The participants were engaged throughout the workshop.

4) The highly pathogenic avian influenza

(HPAI) discussed hereafter is influenza A virus subtype H5 in domestic and wild birds. The subtype H5N1 is the most prevalent in domestic and wild birds in North America; the current genotypes are D1.1 and D1.2.

Canada:

Poultry:

- As of April 17, 2025, 15 confirmed infected premises were affected by avian influenza subtype H5 ([Canadian Food Inspection Agency \(CFIA\), 2025](#)); non-commercial poultry infected primary control zones (PCZ) in Nova Scotia (2), and Newfoundland and Labrador (NL; 1) and non-commercial non-poultry PCZ in NL (1) and Ontario (1) ([CFIA, 2025](#); [World Organisation for Animal Health \(WOAH\), 2024](#)). HPAI subtype H5N5 was detected in the NL small flock ([WOAH, 2025](#)).
- "Vancouver backyard chickens practise social distancing from wild birds amid H5N1 risk." In this news article, "[Dr. Theresa Burns] said the "very safest thing" would be to keep chickens indoors without access to the outside environment, where they might encounter the virus shed from wild birds." ([The Canadian Press, 2025](#)).

USA:

Poultry:

- As of April 17, 2025, 27 backyard flocks were affected by HPAI in the last 30 days ([USDA-APHIS latest confirmed detections](#); [WOAH, 2024](#)).

Swine:

- Lessons from the case of HPAI in backyard pigs in Oregon were shared by Dr. Ryan Scholz, Oregon State Veterinarian, in the SowBridge 2025-2026 distance educational series on February 5th, during the session "H5N1 as it Relates to Pigs" ([WattPoultry.com, 2025](#)).
 - "First, the importance of specialized equipment and techniques for handling non-confined animals became apparent. The team needed access to sedatives and specialized capture equipment not typically associated with pig handling."
 - "Second, the case highlighted the critical need for better security education among small farm operators."

Humans:

- Fewer dairy workers, compared to poultry workers, affected by HPAI reported wearing personal protective equipment (e.g., eye protection, face mask ([Garg et al., 2024](#))).

United Kingdom:

Sheep:

- HPAI was confirmed in a sheep in England on March 24, 2025, following repeat positive milk testing. The sheep was identified following routine surveillance as it was located on a premises with infected captive birds. ([UK's Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2025](#)).



5) WeCAHN Small Ruminant Network meeting Q4 2024:

Alberta has a [Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae \(M. ovi\) testing and fencing program](#) for domestic sheep and goats within 50 km of the bighorn sheep ranges.

6) WeCAHN Poultry Network Q4 2024:

Multiple traditional broiler-breeder chickens died from intestinal blockage with long hay provided for enrichment. Enrichment is encouraged with short hay (chopped) bales.

7) Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)

FMD was reported in three countries that had not reported any detections for multiple decades:

- Germany: a single herd of water buffalo in January ([Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, 2025](#)). Germany has regained its FMD-free status across nearly the entire country. There is no epidemiological link with the FMD outbreaks in Hungary and Slovakia. ([SHIC, 2025](#))
- Hungary and Slovakia: same FMD virus serotype O.
- Hungary: 4 herds ([British Agriculture Bureau \(BAB\), 2025](#)).
- Slovakia: 5 outbreaks ([BAB, 2025](#)).

Information on FMD from CFIA can be found on their webpage: [LINK](#).

Producer Takeaways:

- Introducing layer hens from different sources into your farm can result in severe respiratory infections. Contact your veterinarian if your hens have foul breath, decreased egg production, and difficulty breathing. Your veterinarian may recommend testing or prescribe antibiotics or other supportive care.
- Spring migration is underway! Watch for signs of bird flu (HPAI) in your poultry: lack of energy, decreased egg production, swelling around the head, neck and eyes, coughing, gasping for air, sneezing, nervous signs, tremors, diarrhea and sudden death. If you see these signs, contact your veterinarian.
- Sheep and goats have died suddenly or after developing nervous signs in BC from spring 2024 to winter 2025 due to infection with Listeria bacteria. Contact your veterinarian if your sheep and goats have nervous signs like tremors and seizures or die suddenly. Your veterinarian will likely recommend testing, which may include post-mortem evaluation of the deceased animals.



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