



Yukon Poultry Basics

2014

ANIMAL HEALTH PROGRAM



***What is Biosecurity?**

Biosecurity means doing what you can to reduce the chance of an infectious disease (bacteria, virus, parasite) being carried onto your property by people, animals, equipment or vehicles.

How is disease spread to poultry?

Disease can be caused by bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi. Diseases can pass directly from one bird to another, or from dirty objects, other animals or insects.

Poultry such as laying hens, broilers, and turkeys can be raised successfully in Yukon. This fact sheet provides some points to consider when purchasing birds, and when considering raising poultry in Yukon.

Buying poultry

- ▶ Poultry can be raised to produce eggs, meat, or both. Decide what you want from your poultry; this will help you determine what kinds of birds are best for you.
- ▶ For healthy poultry, it is ideal transport your birds to Yukon in May, when temperatures are warmer.
- ▶ Purchase birds from a reputable supplier that has biosecurity* measures in place.
- ▶ Before purchasing, ask the supplier for information about flock health, level of veterinary care, and vaccination status. Reputable suppliers should be able to answer your questions about the health of their flock.

Transporting poultry

Whether you are transporting birds longer distances from a southern supplier or taking chicks from the store to your farm, follow these tips for successful transportation.

- ▶ Use a clean cardboard box or chicken crate with good bedding and ventilation to transport small numbers of birds. Don't use crates with wire bottoms.
- ▶ Never transport live birds in the trunk of a vehicle.
- ▶ Consider arranging professional transport for large numbers of birds. On longer trips, stop to feed and water birds at least every four hours.
- ▶ Ensure the transport vehicle is warm and protects the birds from cold drafts. Don't transport birds in an air conditioned vehicle. Moisture will accumulate if ventilation is poor. Wet birds will get cold very quickly. Birds can become tired, sick and even die during transport if they are cold.

Poultry on your farm

- ▶ Clean and disinfect the coop or pen prior to introducing new birds.
- ▶ Avoid adding new birds to an established flock. Ideally follow an "all-in/all-out" protocol: bring in new birds after a clean period (at least 1 week long), where there are no birds in the coop/pen.
- ▶ Have an area where new (or sick) birds can be separated from the rest of the flock for at least 30 days.

Contacts for more information:

Animal Health Unit
Government of Yukon

10 Burns Road
Whitehorse, YT

Chief Veterinary Officer
867-667-5600

Email:
animalhealth@gov.yk.ca

Agriculture Branch
Government of Yukon

Room 320,
Elijah Smith Building,
300 Main Street
Whitehorse, YT

1-800-661-0408 ext. 5838

Email:
agriculture@gov.yk.ca

Recommended reading:

For more information on raising poultry in Yukon please refer to the **Poultry Health Handbook for Yukon Farmers**. In that publication you will find more information about health tips, and more detailed descriptions of diseases affecting poultry.

www.env.gov.yk.ca/publications-maps/documents/poultryhealth_web.pdf

Other references on raising poultry:

BC Small Flock Poultry Health Manual

www.agf.gov.bc.ca/ahc/poultry/small_flock_manual.pdf

- ▶ Plan ahead for feeding your birds when they arrive, and have appropriate feed (e.g. chick starter) on hand before your birds arrive.
- ▶ Consult your local veterinarian for the best vaccination schedule and parasite control options for your flock.

Housing

- ▶ Space requirements increase as birds grow. Build coop/pen space for the mature size of the birds (about 2 ft² per adult chicken), and include one nest for every four laying hens.
- ▶ Keep poultry safe from predators and separate from wildlife by providing good quality roofing and surrounding the pen with electrified fences.
- ▶ Provide heat to the poultry barn or coop in winter and always ensure that drinking water does not freeze. Provide shade in the summer, and ventilate to allow air circulation without drafts.

Poultry care tips

- ▶ Develop a daily routine for feeding and observing your birds. Healthy birds should move out of your way when you enter the pen.
- ▶ Watch for aggression among birds – this could be a sign of overcrowding.
- ▶ Monitor feed intake and change water daily. Keep feed containers sealed and clean up spills promptly to minimize rodent activity. Clean litter daily.
- ▶ If birds are huddled near a heat source, they need more warmth in their enclosure. If birds are scattered far from the heat source, they may be too hot.
- ▶ Keep your flock healthy by identifying signs of sickness in individual birds early (see list below). A sick bird may show one or more of these signs.

Signs of sickness in birds

- ▶ Decreased egg production; thin-shelled eggs; refusal to leave nest; not eating
- ▶ Swelling around head, neck, eyes; pale or blue/black comb; warts/scabs on comb
- ▶ Coughing, gasping or sneezing
- ▶ Lack of movement; lameness; lack of coordination; weakness
- ▶ Diarrhea; blood or mucous in stool; sudden death; fluid in the abdomen

What to do if birds seem sick

- ▶ Separate sick birds from healthy ones, and always handle the sick birds last.
- ▶ After handling sick or dead birds, and before leaving the property or working with other birds, wash your hands with soap and change your clothes and boots.
- ▶ If you think you have sick birds or birds are dying, contact a veterinarian or the Animal Health Unit. Take pictures or videos of the sick birds. If a bird dies, consult a veterinarian while the carcass is still available. A veterinarian can help you determine if testing can be done on the carcass to determine the cause of death.

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