

AFA Response to the END Outbreak in Southern California:

A Message from the President, 26 November 2002

The American Federation of Aviculture, Inc.[®] (AFA), the largest avicultural organization in the US, is in a period of transition. We are instituting many changes that should make the organization more efficient and responsive to the needs of our members. One of the changes I wish to institute is an Information Resources Subcommittee that will operate under the auspices of the Education and Media Services Committee. Following the November Board Meeting of AFA, I asked the Director of Education Natasha Schischakin to set-up and put together an operational plan for this group.

However, significant events of concern to aviculture often do not wait for us to finalize institutional change within our organization. One such event is the Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) outbreak in southern California. Therefore, to insure our membership receives accurate and consistent information on a timely basis, I am putting this group to work without any delay, providing me with the latest available information. This is the first of a series of periodic updates that will come from this group that will, for the present, report directly to me as President of AFA.

Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) is a very serious threat to aviculture. As many of you are aware, AFA itself was founded in 1974 and its defining event was how it dealt with a massive avian depopulation program imposed by the government in its attempt to stop the spread of a contemporary END outbreak. END is a viral disease that is near always fatal (see attached link for a description of END). At that time, our organization won important concessions from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) requiring testing of flocks, and ensuring that the rights of aviculturists were respected. We continue to be vigilant and are observing this situation very closely.

I appreciate the efforts that several AFA representatives in California have made to keep our membership apprised of what is going on. I also appreciate the job that the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) the USDA, the END Task Force and related parties are doing to control this outbreak. In order to ensure that we have the most updated information possible, the proposed Information Resources Group within AFA will formally monitor and update us on this situation, and the steps that are being taken to control it.

Regarding this specific project, the California Regional Directors will assist Natasha. Additionally, Northern California State Coordinator Leslie Gillis will be responsible for gathering data and information directly from the Task Force and affected parties.

Leslie has been conducting this work on her own, has done an excellent job, and has established a position of respect with the END Task Force Officials.

Our first goal, of course, is to protect the rights of aviculturists as well as inform aviculturists on what is going on. The second goal is to serve as an information conduit for the END Task Force. They have a tough and demanding job to do. While they also have the responsibility to keep the public informed and are doing so, they are being overwhelmed with telephone and other inquiries. While our purpose is not to prevent anyone from making direct inquiries to the Task Force, we hope to be able to reduce their workload in this regard by serving as a focal point for information. If you wish to obtain direct information, please visit the following website:

http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/Newcastle_info.htm

These are the facts that we have been able to confirm as of today (November 26) regarding the current END outbreak:

- Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) was first confirmed in Southern California on 1 October 2002. The last discovered positive case as of 25 November 2002 was 25 November 2002 (Dr. David Kerr, CDFA). As of this same date, USDA officials advised that the disease appears mainly restricted to "backyard poultry" and no commercial poultry operations have been involved. However, at least one facility with multiple positive tests also housed finches, cockatiels, and lovebirds. These birds were euthanized but constituted a low proportion of the total collection at that site.
- The affected areas in southern California include Los Angeles and parts of Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties. The California State Veterinarian placed the area affected under quarantine on 13 November 2002. Effective 21 November 2002, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) imposed a federal quarantine that states: "The regulations restrict the interstate movement of birds, poultry, products, and materials that could spread END from quarantined areas." The avian species affected by the quarantine include chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, grouse, partridges, pheasants, quails, guinea fowl (peacocks), doves, pigeons, swans, ratites, and ratite eggs.
- As of Monday 25 November 2002, approximately 19,600 birds from 202 premises had been "depopulated" (euthanized). These figures are preliminary, pend-

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1996	Bio-available sulphur	Improved fertility, feathering and disease resistance	World
	High levels of amino acids	Faster, stress free molts, obesity control	World?
1994	Liquid calcium/magnesium/VitD3 (Europe)	Larger clutch sizes, improved hatchability, fitter hens, more clutches, improved behaviour, less stress	Europe, USA
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ing formal validation. Flocks found on an additional 35 premises are scheduled for depopulation. Some 1,157 premises are under quarantine. Depopulation has not or will not occur without either 1) testing or 2) good cause; e.g., direct contact and/or interaction with affected flocks (personal communication with Dr. Annette Whiteford, END Task Force Commander, 22 November 2002). Decisions to destroy infected and exposed birds are always made by a veterinarian.

- State and federal animal health officials are continuing to conduct door-to-door surveys within the affected regions to identify the presence of poultry (as defined above) and other birds, and are following-up on all epidemiological associations. As a precautionary measure, the CDFA has closed all poultry exhibits and fairs and expositions within the regional quarantine area unless operating under a specific compliance agreement.

- An official USDA Press Release dated 22 November 2002 states that the END outbreak has been contained within the region described above and is still considered to represent a single outbreak cluster within a 30-mile radius in Los Angeles county including bordering areas in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. Data from door-to-door surveys and interviews has established that there have been no direct transmissions of END to other states within the United States resulting from this END event, nor has there been any exposure to other backyard poultry in other states.

Folks, as many of you know this is very serious business. "Depopulation" is a horrible and unavoidable consequence of exposure to this disease. Dr. Whiteford and others on her Task Force have convinced me that they are not taking euthanasia or depopulation lightly and that they truly understand how overwhelming it is to lose a beloved bird.

I have been assured that there is no policy for destroying birds within a fixed area. Rather, premises within a fixed area around a positive location are put under quarantine to immediately stop movement of birds and equipment. Birds within this area are located, assessed, and a case-by-case determination is made as to the appropriate action (testing, depopulation, etc.). Again, decisions to destroy infected and exposed birds are always made by a veterinarian. Their goal has been to act quickly to contain this disease before it affects more bird owners and endangers the poultry industry.

Now what can we, as responsible bird owners do to make sure that this disease is contained and is not transmitted to other areas and collections? Certainly the first step is to rigorously follow the USDA and END Task Force Recommendations. We all have to be aware of the terrible risk that we face if this disease spreads to the general avicultural population. We could see the destruction of valuable collections and cherished pets.

It is my belief that as responsible aviculturists, we need to take all precautions possible to avoid exposure and transmission to safeguard our collections, pets and industry. If you live in or near the affected region, be advised that according to the END Task Force officials: "The most dangerous places where you might come in contact with the END virus are swap meets, bird marts, and shows. Every person must decide what they are willing to risk. If you have birds that you don't want to lose, it is a good time to avoid these bird events until this is under control."

In conclusion, I wanted to let you know that AFA is taking this situation extremely seriously and that we will strive to provide you with the most updated information possible. I have attached a number of web site links below. In addition to the above steps, I will continue to maintain contact with Dr. Annette Whiteford, DVM, CDFA Veterinarian, Incidence Commander, END Task Force.

Sincerely,

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF AVICULTURE, INC.®
Benny J. Gallaway, Ph.D.
President

Important Web Links on Exotic Newcastle Disease:
(Note: You will need Adobe Acrobat reader to open these files and it can be obtained at Acrobat Reader Download)
<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>

- Newcastle Disease Update 11/25/2002:
http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/pdfs/END_20Update_20web11-25.pdf
- Regional Quarantine Map: Effective November 13, 2002:
http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/pdfs/END_20Update_20web11-25.pdf
- Fact Sheet: Exotic Newcastle Disease: Information for Bird Owners
http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/pdfs/VND_fc7-8_update1_20spanish_20&_20english.pdf
- Fact Sheet: Exotic Newcastle Disease in caged (Exotic) Birds, Information for Bird Owners, November 2002
http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/pdfs/Exotic_Newcastle_20Disease_20in_20Caged_20Birds_20FINAL.pdf
- Fact Sheet: Questions and Answers on Regional Bird Quarantine - Exotic Newcastle Disease - Information for Bird Owners - November 13, 2002:
<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/pdfs/END%20Reg%20quarantine%20Q%20&A.pdf?PRnum=02-055>

