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AMID NEW CASES, CALIFORNIA'S LEADING POULTRY EXPERTS CONDUCT HIGH PRIORITY WORKSHOP TO ADDRESS VIRULENT NEWCASTLE DISEASE AND PREVENT FURTHER SPREAD

Foster Farms and California Poultry Authorities Share Tips to Safeguard Birds at Home and On the Farm

DUBLIN, Calif. – Today, top poultry experts from the state of California (CDFA), academia (UC Davis) and private industry (Foster Farms) – along with nearly 100 urban farmers and backyard poultry owners – gathered in Dublin, California, to discuss ways to prevent further spread of the highly contagious Virulent Newcastle Disease (VND). Although only a single case was recently diagnosed in Northern California's Alameda County and is no threat to human health, more than 1.1 million birds have been lost to VND in Southern California since May 2018, with [additional cases](#) confirmed just this past week. The poultry experts are urging preventative action to limit any further spread of this deadly avian disease. Spread of VND to California's Central Valley could be catastrophic to local economies, farming communities and backyard poultry enthusiasts.

California is home to more than 100,000 backyard chicken flocks, and Northern California houses [95% of the state's commercial poultry industry](#). Effects of this disease are equally devastating to backyard poultry and commercial flocks and pose a risk to the food supply, state economy and many Northern California communities that depend on poultry and egg production.

The VND outbreak has prompted strict quarantines across Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties and \$45 million in emergency funding from the USDA. In the first week of April, VND was detected in Arizona and is believed to be linked to the current California outbreak. The last major California VND outbreak in 2002/2003 cost nearly \$170 million to eradicate. Nearly four million birds were depopulated.

Dr. Annette Jones, California's State Veterinarian, reinforced the importance of a collaborative approach, increased vigilance and biosecurity in stopping spread of Virulent Newcastle Disease. "In partnership with Foster Farms and the California Poultry Federation, we are bringing together some of the best minds in the poultry industry to provide the latest information to owners and give them useful tools and tips to safeguard birds and report concerns," said Jones, who urges people to call the Sick Bird Hotline at 866-922-BIRD (2473).

"Although Foster Farms flocks have not been affected, our commitment as veterinarians is to ensure that all birds are protected," said Robert O'Connor, DVM of Foster Farms, one of the workshop speakers.

“That is why, along with the California Department of Food & Agriculture, the California Poultry Federation and UC Davis, we are sharing our knowledge and experience with backyard poultry enthusiasts. We all have a part to play in keeping our flocks safe and containing this deadly avian disease.”

Foster Farms, the family owned poultry company based in Livingston, Calif., and the California Poultry Federation (CPF) hosted the workshop to increase public awareness and provide access to critical resources. The seminar covered standard biosecurity measures, signs and symptoms of VND, and resources available to backyard poultry owners should birds become sick. Organizers issued [an infographic outlining steps to prevent VND](#) and encouraged participants to share the information on social media. Additional resources include [California Department of Food and Agriculture](#), [USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service](#) and [California Poultry Federation](#) websites.

The workshop featured State Veterinarian Dr. Annette Jones; Foster Farms' veterinarians and biosecurity experts Dr. Robert O'Connor and Dr. Charles Corsiglia; poultry science specialist Dr. Maurice Pitesky and veterinarian pathologist Dr. Asli Mete from University of California, Davis and California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory.

About Foster Farms

Since 1939, West Coast families have depended on Foster Farms for premium quality chicken and turkey products. Family-owned and operated, the company continues its legacy of excellence and commitment to quality established by its founders, Max and Verda Foster. Foster Farms specializes in fresh, all-natural chicken and turkey products free of preservatives, additives or injected sodium enhancers. Based in California's Central Valley, with ranches also in the Pacific Northwest, the company's fresh chicken and turkey are produced in or near each region served. Foster Farms also produces delicious pre-marinated, ready-to-cook and fully cooked products that meet the quality and convenience needs of today's home cooks, retailers, warehouse clubs and foodservice customers. The company's commitment to excellence, honesty, quality, service and people is a source of great pride, and, a longtime family tradition. For more information, visit www.fosterfarms.com.

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