



The WeCAHN Poultry Network held a quarterly videoconference meeting on February 26th, 2026. Network members discussed the animal health events from October to December 2025. Veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, researchers, and industry representatives attended the meeting.

1) Overview

Data sources in this report include:

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

2) Interesting Cases

Case study: Small flock co-infection

- A small flock showed respiratory signs including head swelling and nasal damage.
- Testing confirmed co-infection with infectious bronchitis virus and coryza.
- A similar outbreak in Western Canada in 2024 was linked to birds from a shared source.
- Using birds from alternative suppliers during shortages may increase disease risk.
- This case highlights the importance of careful sourcing and strong biosecurity.



Case study: Vaccine-related stress in pullets

- A flock of 16-week-old layer pullets showed weakness, low feed and water intake, and increased deaths after intramuscular vaccination.
- Postmortem examination confirmed severe inflammation and damage on the breast muscles at the injection site. Birds were thin and had smaller internal organs.
- Increasing feed energy before vaccination may help birds recover from any injection or handling related stress.



Case study: Rare cancer in a layer hen

- A 2-year-old hen showed weight loss and was unable to eat due to a tongue growth.
- Testing confirmed cancer in the tongue, with no infectious cause found, including avian pox, trichomonosis (canker) or candida (thrush).
- This cancer is rare in poultry and sometimes seen in pet birds. Old age was considered a factor.
- The case shows that long-term mouth problems are not always caused by infection.

Case study: Possible salt toxicity in chicks

- Young broiler chicks showed swelling, fluid buildup, and signs of whole-body illness.
- Findings suggested salt toxicity, with high sodium levels in brain samples, though results were not fully confirmed.
- Water access and quality were unclear, and a similar case involved lack of water followed by sudden water access.
- This case highlights the importance of consistent water supply and monitoring in young chicks.



3) Syndromic and Laboratory Surveillance

Important information

Clinical impression surveys

Never; **Rarely** = 1-2 times per 3 months; **Commonly** = 1-2 times per month; **Very frequently** = 3+ times per month.

'Control charts'

Control charts are a simple way of presenting data collected over time (e.g., increasing or decreasing detection frequencies). Each data point reflects the number of positive samples or cases reported by a diagnostic laboratory over 3 months (quarter of a year). The upper and lower horizontal lines are called control limits. Individual points lying outside the control limits (special cause or unstable point) suggest a need for investigation to determine whether/how significant a signal they represent.

Respiratory system disease

Infectious bronchitis (IBV) in broilers was reported as **Rarely** to **Commonly** and remained **stable**, while air sacculitis and other respiratory causes were reported **Commonly** and **stable**.

Infectious laryngotracheitis (ILT) in broiler-breeders was reported as **Never** to **Rarely** and **stable**, and *Mycoplasma* spp. were reported from **Never** to **Commonly** but remained **stable**.

Respiratory disease in layers and turkeys, including inclusion body hepatitis (IBH)-related signs and *Mycoplasma* spp., was reported as **Never** and **stable**, while mycotic respiratory disease in turkeys was reported **Rarely** to **Never** and **stable**.

Respiratory laboratory findings showed IBH increasing and reaching control limits, with evidence of an upward trend. ILT was identified through one diagnosis and two PCR-positive cases, while *Mycoplasma synoviae* (MS) detections (n=3) remained within control limits and *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* (MG) was not detected.



Digestive system disease

Digestive disorders in broilers, including ascites, coccidiosis (*Eimeria* spp.), and IBH, were reported from **Rarely** to **Very frequently** and were **stable**, with necrotic enteritis (*Clostridium perfringens*) reported **Rarely** to **Never** and generally **stable**.

Digestive conditions in broiler-breeders, including peritonitis, coccidiosis, and histomonosis, were reported from **Never** to **Commonly** and were **stable**.

Digestive disease in layers and turkeys, including coccidiosis, necrotic enteritis, and enteritis, was reported from **Never** to **Rarely** and **stable**, with histomoniasis reported **Never**.

Laboratory results for digestive diseases showed *Enterococcus* spp. and related species within control limits, with occasional detections of *E. cecorum*, *E. faecalis*, *E. faecium*, and *E. hirae*. Enteritis cases included *Clostridium perfringens*–associated necrotic enteritis and *Eimeria* spp.–associated coccidial enteritis, with some *E. coli* isolates showing antimicrobial resistance. All findings remained within expected ranges overall.

Reproductive system disease

Reproductive disorders in broiler-breeders, including septicemia and IBV-related production issues, were reported from **Never** to **Commonly** and were **stable**, with a slight **increasing** trend noted for septicemia in some cases.

Reproductive disorders in layers, including peritonitis/salpingitis and reduced egg production, were reported from **Never** to **Commonly** and were **stable**, while IBV-related production issues were **Rarely** and **stable**. Laboratory findings included salpingitis in layers, with *E. coli* identified as a cause, and all results remained within control limits.



Musculoskeletal system disease

Lameness in broilers, particularly bacterial lameness, was reported from **Commonly** to **Very frequently**, showed mixed trends and remained variable. Viral, developmental, and nutritional lameness were reported **Rarely** to **Never** and generally **stable**.

Lameness in broiler-breeders, mainly bacterial, was reported as **Commonly** and **stable**, while viral and developmental causes were reported **Rarely** to **Never** and **stable**.

Musculoskeletal issues in layers and turkeys, including osteoporosis and reovirus tenosynovitis, were reported **Rarely** to **Never** and mostly stable, with some increasing reports of reovirus in turkeys.

Laboratory results showed bacterial arthritis and cellulitis in breeders, with *Staph aureus* isolated in septic joints and showing antimicrobial resistance. Additional findings included *E. coli* infections and avian reovirus associated with joint and tendon disease, along with sporadic developmental lesions.



4) Reports from other networks

RAIZO, Q4 report (September to November): Infectious bronchitis

Infectious bronchitis (IBV) cases increased across poultry species in Quebec, with higher detection in broilers and a rise in submission positivity, indicating wider regional circulation and increased field pressure.

A temporal increase in IBV detections coincided with the introduction of the IBRON vaccine in Eastern Canada, but causation remains unclear.

Expanded PCR testing in Quebec now allows identification of multiple strains (Delmarva, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Georgia), improving strain-level tracking for surveillance and management.

5) Scan of diseases of concern

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 continues to circulate in North America, with genotypes B3.13 and D1.1 detected in US dairy cattle, while D1.1 and D1.2 predominate in wild birds, indicating ongoing spillover risk between wildlife and livestock. Surveillance data show fluctuating [wild bird](#) positivity in Canada, with recent higher signals in Alberta and lower detections in [British Columbia](#) compared to the previous season.

In Canada, HPAI in poultry remains an active regulatory concern, with multiple commercial and non-commercial infected premises reported between December 2025 and February 2026, and some premises still under control orders. No detections have been reported in Canadian dairy cattle, with all milk samples testing negative to date.

In the United States, HPAI activity in dairy cattle has stabilized with mandatory surveillance ongoing under federal programs. Poultry outbreaks continue in both commercial and small flocks. Human infections remain rare but have been reported in individuals with animal exposure, underscoring occupational risk and the importance of protective practices.

In Europe, for the first time, HPAI surveillance identified antibodies in milk from cows in the Netherlands, on a farm with multiple sick and dead cats, representing a possible cross-species event ([Cohen, 2026](#)).

Severe HPAI infections have also been reported in cats in Poland, including cases linked to raw poultry diets, with rapid progression and high mortality. These findings indicate that domestic cats may act as sentinel indicators of environmental virus presence.

Illegally dumped dead chickens in [California](#) were confirmed with ILT, and were free of HPAI. Unauthorized animal disposal can contribute to disease spread.

Newcastle disease virus activity is increasing in several European countries, affecting both commercial and backyard flocks, with significant mortality reported in some outbreaks. Cases occurring in vaccinated flocks raise concerns about vaccine performance or implementation, emphasizing the need for strict biosecurity and vaccination program review to limit economic losses and cross-border spread.

Producer takeaways



- Poultry health is generally stable overall, but early-life bacterial infections and common endemic diseases continue to cause production losses, highlighting the importance of strong chick management, sanitation, and early monitoring.
- Mixed infections involving multiple disease agents are still being seen, suggesting producers should not assume a single cause when birds are sick, especially when birds come from different or changing sources.
- Highly pathogenic avian influenza remains active in North America and Newcastle disease is increasing in parts of Europe, reinforcing the need for strict biosecurity, routine surveillance, and prompt reporting of unusual illness or mortality.

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