



The WeCAHN Poultry Network held a quarterly videoconference meeting on February 26th, 2026. The 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. Data were synthesized from clinical impression surveys completed by practitioners and laboratory submissions from Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS), Manitoba Veterinary Diagnostic Services (VDS), and the University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU).

1) Interesting cases



A small flock developed respiratory signs including severe face and eye swelling. Testing confirmed infection with infectious bronchitis virus and infectious coryza. A similar outbreak in Western Canada in 2024 was linked to a shared bird source. This case highlights the importance of careful sourcing of birds and maintaining strong biosecurity when introducing new stock.

On a separate case, a flock of young pullets showed weakness, reduced feed and water intake, and higher mortality following vaccination by injection. Postmortem findings showed muscle inflammation and damage with small organs and poor body condition. Increasing feed energy prior to vaccination may help young flocks recover from stress.

A 2-year old hen showed weight loss, oral lesions, and difficulty eating. Testing confirmed cancer in the tongue, with no infectious cause identified, including avian pox, trichomonosis (canker) or candida (thrush). Cancer of the tongue is uncommon in poultry and more often seen in pet birds. Age was considered a factor.

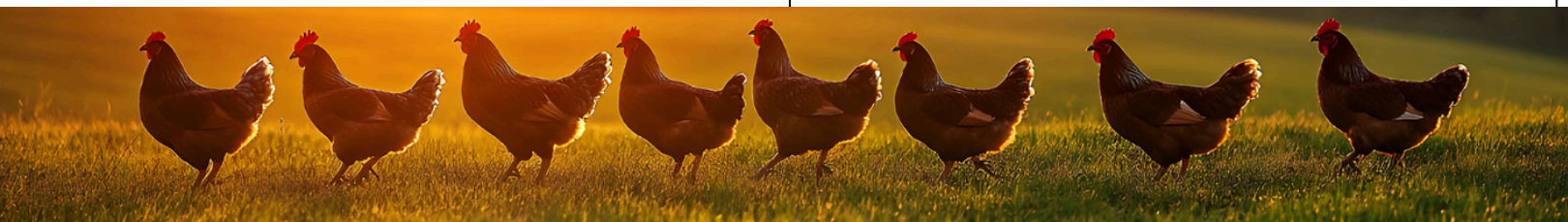
Another notable case involved baby broiler chicks with swelling, fluid buildup, and signs of whole-body illness. Findings suggested possible salt toxicity, supported by elevated sodium levels in the brain, although extensive testing could not confirm diagnosis. Water access and quality were unclear, and similar cases have been linked to inconsistent water availability. This case highlights the importance of consistent access to clean water and careful water management in young chicks.



2) Syndromic and Laboratory Surveillance

Respiratory disease remains a consistent concern across poultry types, with infectious bronchitis increasing and now appearing more frequently in broilers, while air sac infections and other respiratory issues remain common and overall stable. Infectious laryngotracheitis (ILT) and Mycoplasma-related infections continue to occur at low levels, with no major change in trend. Laboratory findings confirm ongoing detection of respiratory pathogens including Mycoplasma synoviae (MS) and no Mycoplasma gallisepticum (MG), with results generally within expected ranges, while infectious bronchitis virus detections have increased but remain within ranges.

Digestive disease continues to be one of the more commonly reported problem areas, with conditions such as coccidiosis, necrotic enteritis, and enteritis showing stable patterns overall. Key pathogens including *Eimeria* spp., *Clostridium perfringens*, and *E. coli* continue to be detected, with *E. coli* showing occasional resistance but no major shift in overall trends. Laboratory results indicate these pathogens remain within expected control levels, with no significant new outbreaks beyond routine cases.





Reproductive issues, including peritonitis and salpingitis, remain present but generally stable, with some isolated increases in septicemia-related cases. *E. coli* remains the primary pathogen associated with these conditions, with occasional involvement of other bacteria, and overall findings remain within expected ranges. No major changes in disease patterns were observed, and most detections reflect ongoing background levels.

Musculoskeletal problems, particularly lameness, continue to be reported, with bacterial causes being the most common and remaining stable, while some reovirus-associated joint issues in turkeys show a slight increase. Key pathogens include *Staph. aureus*, *E. coli*, and avian reovirus, with laboratory findings confirming these as ongoing contributors to joint and tendon problems. Overall trends remain largely stable, with localized increases in certain turkey cases but no widespread shifts.

Systemic and early-life diseases, including septicemia and yolk sac infections, remain common across production types and continue to contribute to early mortality, with overall trends stable. *E. coli* is the main pathogen involved, with occasional detections of *Salmonella* spp. and Influenza A in some cases, all within expected ranges. Laboratory results indicate no major deviations from normal patterns.

3) Reports from other networks

Infectious bronchitis (IBV) increased across poultry in Quebec, with more cases reported and higher detection in broilers, indicating wider spread. A new IBV vaccine was introduced around the same time as increased detections, but it is not clear if it is related. New testing tools in Quebec now allow better identification of different IBV strains, improving tracking of the disease.

4) Scan of diseases of concern

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 continues to circulate in wild birds and has caused ongoing outbreaks in poultry across Canada and the United States, with some farms still under control measures. Cases are spread across multiple provinces in Western Canada, showing continued geographic risk. No cases have been found in Canadian dairy cattle, and dairy cases in the US have stabilized. Limiting contact between poultry and wild birds remains critical.

HPAI was detected for the first time in cow milk in the Netherlands on a farm with severely ill and dead cats. HPAI causes rapid and severe illness in cats, suggesting they may signal environmental presence of the virus. Studies have shown that cats get infected with HPAI by eating contaminated raw poultry or wild birds.

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 activity is increasing in several European countries, affecting both commercial and backyard flocks. Significant losses have been reported in some outbreaks, including in vaccinated flocks, raising concerns about control effectiveness and 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.

Financial support was provided under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.