

Additional measures, including vaccination, may be considered depending upon circumstances. The decision to implement this program in an individual case would depend upon the risk the premise provides to commercial growers and the owner's willingness to participate.

The owner of the infected birds would then accept the responsibility to adopt normal biosecurity measures. These include proper clean out of the premises, restricted access to the property and future purchase of only ILT-free birds. If the owner wishes to replace 100% of the flock, they would then be responsible for the remaining 1/3 cost of new birds.

If the flock becomes infected a second time, there would be no further assistance provided. Though this is a voluntary program, the provincial government does have the legal right, under the *Livestock Health Act*, to require clean out of premises if they pose a significant threat to the commercial industry.

## Links

### Pamphlet on Biosecurity

[www.nr.gov.nl.ca/agric/](http://www.nr.gov.nl.ca/agric/)

### Livestock Health Act:

[www.assembly.nl.ca/legislation/sr/statutes/l22.htm](http://www.assembly.nl.ca/legislation/sr/statutes/l22.htm)

For more information on ILT and other poultry diseases, please contact the Poultry Veterinarian, the Poultry Specialist or the Animal Health Division.

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Other information pamphlets are available online from the Department of Natural Resources at:

[www.nr.gov.nl.ca/agric/](http://www.nr.gov.nl.ca/agric/)

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# Infectious Laryngotracheitis (ILT) in Poultry

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## Introduction

**Infectious Laryngotracheitis (ILT)** is a very infectious respiratory disease of poultry that is found mostly in chickens, but can also cause disease in related birds such as the pheasant. Though it is not thought to cause disease in other poultry, it may be spread by other common domestic birds such as turkeys, ducks, geese, pigeons, quail, etc.

There are many diseases that affect poultry. However, ILT is of particular importance because:

- It can cause severe illness and death in a large proportion of a flock;
- It can cause a severe economic loss in commercial flocks through death, disease and decreased production;
- It cannot be treated;
- It remains in a carrier state in the flock after recovery; and most importantly,
- It is preventable.

This pamphlet is provided, in cooperation with the Chicken Farmers of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Egg Producers of Newfoundland and Labrador, to advise commercial poultry farmers and hobbyists on the details of this disease.

## The Disease

ILT is caused by a virus (herpes virus) that spreads from bird to bird through direct contact (close coughing, face to face touching) or through contamination of common equipment (drinkers, feed troughs, etc.). It can also be spread by people, animals (dogs, cats, other species of birds) and equipment that have been in contact with infected chickens and which then enter or are brought into other premises with healthy chickens.

Once infected, a chicken will usually become sick within two weeks. Signs of the disease are nasal and eye discharge, moist-sounding breathing, coughing and gasping. In severe cases, heavy breathing and coughing up of bloody mucus are seen. Sometimes blood is apparent on the walls where affected birds have been coughing. The percentage of birds affected can range up to 100%, while death occurs usually in 5-30% of the flock.

Birds may recover from the illness within 2 weeks but can remain carriers of the virus for long periods of time afterwards. These carrier birds become a threat for other poultry owners. A bird that appears to be healthy may be introduced into a new flock, and two weeks later, all of the other birds are sick. The bird carrying the disease still appears healthy (as it has some immunity from its first infection) and, therefore, can create confusion when it is explained that an otherwise healthy appearing bird is the cause of illness in all of the others.

Stress also helps to bring out the disease as it makes carrier birds shed the virus. Mixing new birds together, poor ventilation, inadequate space or food or changes in temperature may all help in causing the disease.

Hobby flocks are more often identified with this disease than commercial flocks. The commercial poultry industry has developed practices of extreme isolation of their flocks from the point of hatching through the various phases of production. **Biosecurity** is the expression used for the combined practices of physical isolation, routine disinfection, restricted human and animal access and environmental control. Most hobby flocks do not follow these practices, and the resulting movement of people and birds from one backyard to another spreads disease through these flocks.

## Control

The best means of control is to have an entire industry that is free from this disease. Appropriate measures of biosecurity would then prevent the disease from appearing or spreading. As the disease does exist in this province and will not likely disappear, each individual farm must take those measures which will help to reduce this threat. *It is important to realize that other than the loss of birds within one's own flock, anyone who spreads this disease to someone else's flock may face legal and financial consequences if it can be shown that they were liable for this spread.* Vaccination is an option but this is usually only done when control measures fail.

To prevent the disease from entering a flock:

- Choose only birds coming from flocks that are proven to be free of ILT.
- Make sure that any buildings that birds are placed into have been properly cleaned out and did not previously contain sick birds. If sick birds were in the building, then a combination of disinfection and keeping the building free of birds for an extended period of time can eliminate the virus.
- Do not allow other animals and people to enter your barns, especially if they also own poultry.
- Do not visit other poultry barns unless necessary. If so, be sure that people, boots and clothing are properly cleaned afterwards.
- Carry out regular cleaning of the building and disinfect between flocks.

## Compensation Programs

Due to the severe impact this disease can have on the commercial poultry industry, the poultry industry and the provincial government have developed a program to help eliminate this disease. If a flock has been identified with ILT, these groups may assist the owners by:

- Providing diagnostic support to assure that the disease is ILT;
- Destroying all birds at risk;
- Advising on proper clean-out measures; and
- Providing an equivalent number of replacement birds (at 2/3 total value) from ILT free flocks.

