



DISEASE ALERT

PARAMYXOVIRUS *in* North Shore WILD PIGEONS

Virulent Paramyxovirus (vPMV) was detected in a group of wild pigeons on the North Shore in February 2021. The flocks experienced higher than average mortality associated with this avian-specific viral infection. Captive pigeon, poultry and other domestic bird owners in the region should be vigilant for clinical signs of infection such as neck-twisting, imbalance, head tremors and death.

▶ PARAMYXOVIRUS

This is a family of bird viruses that have great variation in species susceptibility and ability to cause disease. Strains are typed as mild, moderate or virulent.

▶ SPECIES AFFECTED

Many bird species are susceptible to PMV, including poultry, gamebirds, birds of prey, waterfowl and caged pet birds. The disease in poultry is called Newcastle Disease. The natural host species for the pigeon-adapted strain of paramyxovirus (pPMV) are pigeons and doves (wild and domestic).

▶ HOW IT IS SPREAD

Geographic distribution of pigeon PMV is usually related to the movement of infected feral pigeons. Spread between captive bird locations is usually associated with the movement of contaminated equipment, footwear, manure or infected carrier birds.

▶ SIGNS OF INFECTION

The incubation period can vary but is generally 2-12 days. There are significant differences in how different strains of PMV cause disease. Infections may be sub-clinical (no signs), mild to moderate (depression, thirst, green diarrhea, stop egg laying) or severe (twisted necks, incoordination and loss of balance, gasping, muscle tremors, death).

▶ HUMAN HEALTH

On rare occasions exposure to PMV has caused temporary conjunctivitis (pink eye).

▶ PREVENTION

Good biosecurity measures should prevent the introduction of the virus to susceptible birds. Discourage poultry from mixing with wild pigeons, example: keep feeders inside the coop. There is an effective pPMV vaccine for pigeons available through licensed veterinarians.

▶ WHO TO CALL

For any issues with bird health always contact your veterinarian.

The B.C. Ministry of Agriculture Animal Health Centre in Abbotsford provides a diagnostic service for commercial and small flock poultry. Please call **1 800-661-9903** to report unexplained poultry illness or mortality.

In B.C., the Wild Bird Mortality Investigation Plan hotline, **1 866-431-2473**, enables members of the public to report sightings of sick or dead wild birds.



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