

Document # 1-
State Vet Letter



Steven W. Troxler
Commissioner

North Carolina Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services
Veterinary Division

R. Douglas Meckes, DVM
State Veterinarian

May 25, 2016

Dear Shelter Directors,

North Carolina has a large vibrant commercial poultry industry that contributes 100,000 jobs and over \$18 billion dollars to our economy each year. In addition, our state is home to thousands of small poultry flocks that are kept for enjoyment as pets, for exhibition or for egg or meat production. If these two sectors of our poultry flocks are in close contact, disease spread can be devastating, especially to commercial flocks. Often apparently healthy small flocks can harbor disease organisms that may infect commercial flocks which are kept in a sheltered environment. We are asking for your help in preventing the spread of disease between poultry flocks in North Carolina by allowing us to test any poultry that you seize or that have been surrendered to your shelter before you consider adoption into the community. In recent years, adoption of untested surrendered or seized poultry has been associated with the spread of certain diseases far beyond the original flock, necessitating the destruction of a number of small as well as large commercial flocks.

We ask that you contact our staff when you have poultry in your shelter. We will be happy to test the birds for several diseases that can have serious consequences for our NC flocks free of charge, and provide you with the outcome of that testing. We recommend that due to the potential threat to our NC poultry flocks that birds testing positive for disease not be considered suitable for adoption. We will appreciate your assistance in this attempt to protect the poultry industry of North Carolina from undue risk of disease spread. Please contact me if you have questions or comments concerning our request. Thank you for your consideration of our request and your contribution to poultry health in North Carolina.

Sincerely,

R Douglas Meckes, DVM
State Veterinarian

Bob Marotto

To: Blomquist, J
Subject: RE: Information about testing of seized or surrendered poultry

Subject: FW: Information about testing of seized or surrendered poultry

FYI
Stay safe

Dr. Federico,

It was a pleasure speaking with you. If you receive poultry you would like us to test, we will send someone from our field staff out to test the birds and deliver the samples to the lab. We will be testing for the following reportable diseases: Infectious Laryngotracheitis (ILT), Mycoplasma gallisepticum (MG), Mycoplasma synoviae (MS) and Avian Influenza (AI). Our lab in Raleigh runs these samples three days each week—Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. If we deliver by late morning, we usually get the results the same day, so hopefully that will help your turn-around time. To contact us, please call one of the following staff: We will get things in motion.

Sarah Mason 919-707-3250 or 919-609-2644 (the whole state)

Jimmy Collie 919-606-8105 (the whole state)

Danny Fryar 919-606-8107 (the eastern part of NC)

Travis Love 919-606-8109 (the western part of NC)

Please let me know if you have any further questions,
Thank you,

Sarah J. Mason, DVM, PhD

Director of Animal Health Programs-Poultry

NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Veterinary Division

1030 Mail Service Center

Raleigh, NC 27699-1030

Sarah.J.Mason@ncagr.gov

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Document 3 -
Email let w/
Poultry Dev,
NC OACS

Bob Marotto

From: Bob Marotto
Sent: Wednesday, June 08, 2016 8:49 AM
To: Andrew Brinkley
Subject: Poultry Testing Communication

Drew,

Very well done.

Do you mind asking Dr. Mason if she minds us sharing her communication until such time as there is an FAQ to distribute?

Bob

*Bob Marotto
Director
Orange County Animal Services
(919) 968-2287*

Check us out online or on facebook!

*web: www.orangecountync.gov/departments/animalservices
facebook: www.facebook.com/OCASpets*

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From: Andrew Brinkley
Sent: Tuesday, June 07, 2016 4:46 PM
To: Bob Marotto
Subject: FW: report

Bob,

Dr. Mason provided a rather detailed response to the email I sent her last Friday. She answered the questions I posed in my email and indicated that her department is going to be giving strong consideration to putting together a FAQ as they have time. Her email and my reply are below.

Dr. Mason indicated that this is not a new recommendation for sheltered poultry animals. That is consistent with what I heard from Carolina Waterfowl; Jennifer Gordon told me that her contacts in the Charlotte area received a similar letter a few years ago but had not

heard anything recently. I certainly do not recall seeing anything about this before we received the communication dated May 25. It sounds like NCDA&CS has a communication issue to resolve. I provided Dr. Mason with contact info for NCAF and NCARCA in case they wish to pursue other channels to disseminate the message.

Thanks,

Drew Brinkley

Animal Services Operations Manager
Orange County Animal Services
(919) 942-7387 ext. 229



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From: Andrew Brinkley
Sent: Tuesday, June 07, 2016 4:26 PM
To: 'Mason, Sarah'
Cc: Meckes, Doug
Subject: RE: report

Dr. Mason,

Thank you for taking the time to provide such a comprehensive response to the list of questions I provided. Your email will prove quite helpful in helping us digest the larger concerns that led to these recommendations. This information will also help us to better respond to questions we receive from our partners as we work through cases involving poultry. My colleagues in Orange County and I are quite familiar with issues that concern the dogs and cats in our community, but personally speaking I am less familiar with issues such as this one that affect other animals we may occasionally have a need to shelter. Your expert opinion on the subject is quite valuable in helping assure we are fully informed and can make the best possible decisions for the people and animals in our community.

I am glad to hear that the notion of a "FAQ" was well received. I am sure a document of that kind will be useful in helping my peers at other agencies unpack the issues that go along with implementing the poultry recommendation. Also, there are a couple of professional organizations (North Carolina Animal Federation [NCAF] and North Carolina Animal and Rabies Control Association [NCARCA]) in the state you might consider contacting to help increase the saturation of the message. They may be agreeable to posting the letter from Dr. Meckes on their websites or forwarding it to the agencies in their memberships. Here are the

links to the contact information from their websites in case you want to pursue reaching out to them:

<http://www.ncanimalfederation.org/contact-us.html>

<http://www.ncarca.com/CONTACT.htm>

Finally, I was hoping I could get your advice on one more topic. Are there any specific protocols you would suggest we follow to disinfect the enclosures where we house poultry? We use bleach and Trifectant (potassium peroxymonosulfate) as our primary disinfecting agents to combat the pathogens we routinely expect to find in a shelter setting. I am curious to know if these agents are effective against the reportable poultry diseases of concern or if we need to consider using some other protocol after we have a positive case such as the MS rooster we just sheltered.

Respectfully,

Drew Brinkley

Animal Services Operations Manager
Orange County Animal Services
(919) 942-7387 ext. 229



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From: Mason, Sarah [<mailto:sarah.j.mason@ncagr.gov>]

Sent: Tuesday, June 07, 2016 1:16 PM

To: Andrew Brinkley

Cc: Meckes, Doug

Subject: RE: report

Thanks for your input, Drew. The idea of creating an FAQ is a good one. We'll work on that as we can get it done. I'll try to answer your immediate questions in this email.

This effort is actually not new. We sent out a similar request several years ago and decided recently to repeat it as it had been a while. Our colleagues in the Animal Welfare section of Vet Division offered to send it via their email distribution list. If there are other shelters that would like to be a part of the efforts, we'd be happy to send along to them. We just used the list at hand. I remember when we made the same request a few years ago, there was concern from shelters that did not accept poultry about why they were receiving the request. I think it's just not possible to reach everyone, but we'd like to try.

As far as the impetus for the request, we experienced an outbreak of some poultry diseases after a seizure that took place a few years ago. The poultry seized were redistributed in the parking lot of the shelter without any testing. We began to receive reports of poultry taken to one of our diagnostic labs that had come from the welfare seizure. They had a variety of serious poultry diseases. The birds had been distributed to at least 10 separate new premises in a number of different counties. We spent quite a few hours tracing those birds, and in most cases, they had infected the receiving flocks with one or more diseases. Some birds were never traced.

As far as the proportion of poultry in NC that has one or more of the four diseases we test for, that is unknown. We have thought of testing at shows or fairs to get some idea of what is out there in exhibition birds, but have not had the funding to do this testing. Commercial poultry flocks are generally free of the diseases in question, as all are diseases associated with considerable morbidity or mortality. The commercial industry spent a great deal of effort eradicating the Mycoplasma (MG and MS) diseases from their breeder flocks years ago, as those are egg transmitted, and are not curable, so infected birds remain carriers and offspring are often sick. These diseases are monitored through the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) and these certifications are available to all flocks, not just commercial ones, but the small flocks rarely seek those “clean” certifications because of the difficulty in achieving them as well as the cost involved. All that said, most seized birds test positive for one or more of the four diseases. Recently we have found some that were negative, and recommended them for adoption. Our experience has been that most birds we test in shelters are positive, and we would thus recommend euthanasia rather than adoption. This may distress some, but anyone who has lost their flock to one of these diseases would differ I expect. They are not gentle diseases generally, and though some birds will live through them with treatment, they will remain carriers for life (this is true of ILT, MG and MS). AI is a different story, and is a highly regulated disease due to the severe economic consequences of it in the US—I’m sure you are aware of the nearly 50 million birds who died or were depopulated due to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in 2015. That is a whole other conversation I’ll be happy to get into if you like.

Treatment options: There are vaccines for ILT so it can be prevented if the owner decides to go this route. Unfortunately, most vaccines are only available in large dose vials, so it can be cost prohibitive for the owners. One live vaccine for ILT can be used only with a permit from our office, as it has the ability to spread and infect other poultry. Killed vaccines for MG and MS exist but are not completely protective. Live vaccines for MG and MS are not permitted in NC. Treatment for MG and MS is possible, but with the drugs that are legal for poultry, they cannot be cured, only ameliorated, and you still end up with a carrier status.

We do from time to time find backyard flocks that are positive for MG or MS or ILT. If they have MG or ILT a quarantine is required for 45 days, and we work with the owner to determine the best option for their flock. Some elect to keep the flock and others want to depopulate. The owners need to understand that their flocks will be carriers, so any new birds they purchase could be affected, and if they sell offspring, they should alert the buyer to the disease problem. Sometimes this does not happen and the new owner ends up with a nasty surprise. Commercial farms do see ILT in broilers particularly from time to time, often right at market age. They market the birds as soon as possible in that case. Breeder commercial birds are vaccinated against ILT. Turkeys are not affected by ILT. Commercial firms, if they find MG in their breeder birds will generally depopulate the entire flock—this is because it is egg transmitted, and the broilers hatched from these birds will become sick before they reach market age. In addition, the hatchery handling eggs from these infected flocks will lose their NPIP status, making it hard to move the eggs or chicks interstate or to sell them. MS is a bit different, depending on the strain involved. Some cause severe disease and some do not. The flock may be depopulated or the company may decide to treat them with antibiotics to try and salvage some hatching eggs. Economics figure into this equation in a big way.

If birds are housed together and some test positive, we consider them all positive. We are running the type of test that lets us know if they are shedding the organism through their respiratory system. We would need to collect serum to determine if the birds are infected, but not shedding at the time of testing. Basically we are choosing the test that gives us the most information for the cost.

Risk assessments may have been done for these diseases, but I don’t have that information. If they have been infected with MG, MS or ILT, we know that they will begin to shed again when stressed in some way, so remain a risk to any birds they come into contact with. I cannot tell you how often I get calls from distraught flock owners who say that they bought a chicken at the flea market or at the fair, etc, and now their whole flock is sick. It is very sad when this happens.

Our recommendation will remain in place as long as I can fund the testing. We are not trying to target these flocks or eliminate them, only educate people about disease, and protect the flocks they have already at home.

I hope this has answered some of the questions you posed. Again, this is a request, not an order, and if a shelter decides not to participate, that is their choice. We are trying to promote flock health, and help people succeed in their quest to have a good experience with their small flock. I will try to find time to put together some FAQs and I think that is an excellent idea. I’ll also be happy to discuss this further with anyone who would like.

Thanks again for your support in this endeavor,

Sarah J. Mason, DVM, PhD

Director of Animal Health Programs-Poultry

NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Veterinary Division

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From: Andrew Brinkley [<mailto:abrinkley@orangecountync.gov>]

Sent: Friday, June 03, 2016 2:39 PM

To: Mason, Sarah <sarah.j.mason@ncagr.gov>

Subject: RE: report

Dr. Mason,

Thank you for providing a copy of the full report. I understand our Veterinary Health Care Manager, Jasmine Johnson, received a copy from the lab by email Tuesday afternoon.

I do not think an official letter from your office will be necessary, though I appreciate the offer to provide one. We will not seek to place the rooster and schedule him for euthanasia after assuring that he has reached the end of his required holding period. This will be done in accordance with the recommendation contained in letter we received from Dr. Meckes dated May 25 and reinforced in our conversation Tuesday morning and your email from yesterday.

Also, I wanted to convey to you that we have been in touch with a couple of our placement partners (a.k.a. "rescue groups") who have previously helped us find successful outcomes for farm animals, including poultry, that have found their way into our custody. I think it is fair to characterize that there is concern and question about the recommendation among those

groups, and I suspect that the same would be true for others who have a vested interest in helping avoid euthanasia of animals in shelters.

Have you considered developing something along the lines of a "FAQ" that could be provided to shelters? I believe that would be quite helpful in helping shelters understand the context and reasoning behind the recommendation as well as providing some detail that could be shared with other stakeholders. Some issues that have come to my attention in conversations with colleagues and partners thus far are summarized below.

- How has this recommendation been communicated? (I have been given a sense that not all shelters across the state received the message from Dr. Meckes.)
- What prompted the issuance of the recommendation? Was there a specific outbreak or rise in the incidence of these reportable diseases that brought it about at this particular time?
- What is known about the proportion of birds in the state's poultry population that harbor one or more of these diseases? In other words, can we expect this to mean that a substantial percentage of birds received at shelters that would have previously been considered suitable for placement will now need to be euthanized?
- Are there treatment options for one or more of these diseases that could be considered as a viable alternative to euthanasia?
- What would the recommendation be for a bird that tested positive for one of these diseases if it were in a "backyard farm" instead of a shelter? A sanctuary that intends to care for the animal for the remainder of its life? A commercial farm?
- What if there are multiple birds received from a single location and only some of them test positively?
- Can the risk of adopting poultry with one of these diseases be quantified?
- Is it known how long this recommendation will be in place?

Thanks,

Drew Brinkley

Animal Services Operations Manager
Orange County Animal Services
(919) 942-7387 ext. 229



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From: Mason, Sarah [<mailto:sarah.j.mason@ncagr.gov>]
Sent: Thursday, June 02, 2016 8:24 AM

To: Andrew Brinkley
Subject: FW: report

Drew,

It appears this may have been sent to wrong address. Here is the final report on the rooster. If you would like a letter from this office making recommendation for no adoption, we'll be happy to provide one.

Thanks for your help,

Sarah J. Mason, DVM, PhD

Director of Animal Health Programs-Poultry

NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Veterinary Division

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From: Wood, Beverly M

Sent: Wednesday, June 01, 2016 4:17 PM

To: Mason, Sarah <sarah.j.mason@ncagr.gov>

Subject: report