

A Georgia Poultry Laboratory Production

Small Flock Owner Guide to Bird Health Questions and Answers

You are the key to poultry health!

How many buff cochins can I trade for a trio of Sebrights?

Will my rooster win the crowing contest?

Does this sound like you?

As a poultry event attendee, you are most likely interested in poultry, along with their care, breeding, housing, and health. Buying and selling can bring great enjoyment as can seeing your prized bird take home the blue ribbon. This brochure will provide you with answers to commonly asked questions about what tests are conducted on birds at public events and why, how to practice good habits to keep birds healthy, and which resources to contact for more information on poultry health.

Auctions and Events

Why are my birds tested when I take them to events like auctions? What are they tested for?

The Georgia Department of Agriculture works in collaboration with the Georgia Poultry Laboratory Network to randomly test birds for certain diseases. Testing can be performed at places like auctions, fairs, and flea markets because the birds present are brought together from different locations and may be of mixed ages, breed types, species or health status. Usually the birds will be visually examined and may receive a blood test to detect pullorum disease and avian influenza.

Are there certain times I should not participate in events, shows, or actions?

Yes! If your birds are showing signs of illness, *do not* take them to a show, exhibit, auction, or any other event where poultry are present. Complying with this guideline is CRITICAL since your birds could pass along their illness to other birds, and this disease might spread throughout the state.

Examples of signs of illness:

- Birds show swollen face and eyes
- Birds experience a runny nose, coughing, sneezing, difficulty breathing
- Birds have diarrhea or loose droppings
- Birds are off feed, have rough feathers, or some have died at home
- Birds are quiet and don't want to move around

Can I get disease that my birds have?

In most cases, illnesses that infect birds do not infect people. However, you may be a carrier of illness to other birds.

Why are the birds leg banded? How long is the test good? What happens if the band falls off?

Birds are leg banded to serve as proof that they have been tested for pullorum disease and do not have the illness. The test is valid for one year and is needed to take birds across state lines. Also, the band can help identify a bird after testing if needed. If a band falls off, please call 770-766-6810 to request a retest.

Biosecurity

“Biosecurity is a term for protection of life. It includes all the things you need to do to keep your birds healthy, to prevent disease from coming onto your farm, or to prevent disease from leaving your farm should your birds become ill.”

Where can I get information about biosecurity?

Biosecurity for the Birds is a USDA campaign to help producers remember that basic biosecurity can be expressed in 6 steps.

1. Keep Your Distance. Although you may be tempted to look at other birds at a show, the more space you can put between your birds and your neighbor's birds, the better you will be and the less likely for your birds to catch some

contagious disease.

2. **Keep It Clean.** Since poultry disease can be present on your body and clothing, taking showers and laundering clothing after being around your birds or after attending events where other birds are present is very important.
3. **Don't Haul Disease Home.** Wash your vehicle after attending events like auctions, fairs, exhibits, etc.
4. **Don't Share Farm Equipment with Your Neighbors.** Disease can easily spread from sharing crates, cages, and garden tools. Get your own equipment.
5. **Learn to Recognize Signs of Disease.** You know your birds better than anyone. If your bird looks sick, chances are good that he is and may need treatment.
6. **Report Sick Birds Immediately.** Please call one of the numbers listed in this pamphlet if you suspect disease in your birds.

My birds are sick like these birds above. What can I do?

The GPLN will look at your birds free of charge. Birds taken to the lab will not be returned to the owner. As an alternative, a veterinarian may be available to visit your farm to do evaluations and testing. With either approach, a diagnosis will be made and recommendations given.

If a disease is found, what will happen to me, my birds and my farm?

Most common diseases can be left alone, treated, or prevented with vaccination. Our veterinarians and staff will work with you to find the best option. With some diseases, the plan might include isolation to prevent spread to other flocks. In this case, the isolation is meant to protect all poultry both in Georgia and the entire USA.

I have heard of the NPIP. What is it?

NPIP stands for National Poultry Improvement Plan and is a program of testing birds to certify flocks as free from certain diseases. Diseases covered under NPIP are MG, MS, pullorum, and avian influenza. Buying chicks from NPIP hatcheries certifies that these birds are free from these diseases. To sign up for membership, please call:
770-766-6810 (Gainesville)



GPLN

<http://www.gapoultrylab.org>

Several labs are located conveniently throughout Georgia:

770-766-6810 (Gainesville)

478-994-1219 (Forsyth)

970-420-4155 (Tifton)

The GPLN supports the poultry industry and other bird owners by providing health monitoring and veterinary diagnostic services specific to poultry. The GPLN cooperates with the poultry industry, government agencies and other laboratories for the prevention, management and control of poultry disease outbreaks statewide. Avian veterinarians are available to diagnose your birds free of charge!