

## Assessment and Update of the virulent Newcastle Disease Outbreak in Southern California

### **Background:**

- Virulent Newcastle Disease (vND) is a foreign animal disease that causes high mortality, economic losses and trade restrictions in commercial poultry. Due to its potential as a biologic weapon, vND is also designated as a “select agent” by US Department of Homeland Security.
- Since May 2018, an outbreak of the foreign animal disease virulent Newcastle Disease (vND) has been present in California and has affected commercial, backyard and game fowl populations.
- Over 400 backyard premises, and 4 commercial and 6 non-commercial egg production premises have been affected. Over 1.1 million birds have been euthanized in order to control the outbreak (dead birds to do not replicate virus).
- While the disease is concentrated in Southern California the outbreak has recently spread into Northern California and Utah. The investigation in Northern California is on- going with only one infected rooster taken to a veterinarian identified to date.

### **Outbreak importance:**

- The U.S. remains the largest producer and second largest exporter of poultry products world-wide. If the outbreak continues to expand, farmers and consumers will be affected.

### **Response:**

- The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has partnered with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to respond to this challenge with a focus on:
  - Depopulation of affected or suspect flocks followed by at least 120-day fallow (no birds can be restocked)
  - Epidemiological investigations to trace the source(s) of the outbreak
  - Outreach and education efforts to commercial and non-commercial poultry owners to improve disease prevention efforts.
  - Increased testing in commercial and non-commercial birds
- The peri-urban nature of this outbreak coupled with language, cultural and trust barriers create significant challenges to these response efforts. However, the above described steps are necessary and essential to eradicate vND from the U.S. and keep it a foreign animal disease as opposed to an endemic disease.
- The recent support from the USDA including the redirection of \$45 million federal emergency monies previously provided in 2015 for HPAI focused on increasing USDA- APHIS resources including “boots on the ground” are beginning to take effect.
- Continued USDA support is necessary to eliminate the disease. Because Southern California has been repeatedly affected by vND (3 outbreaks totaling hundreds of millions of dollars in the last 50 years), long-term support including collaboration with USDA, land grant institutions and new county extension hires with a focus on poultry experts with language skills who are embedded in the affected communities is essential.