



Avian Cholera



What is avian cholera?

Avian cholera is one of the most significant diseases of waterfowl in North America. It is caused by the bacterium *Pastuerella multocida*.

Where is it found?

First reported in the 1940's in Texas it has since been reported in every state in the U.S. Most large scale outbreaks are associated with migration flyways and a significant portion focused west of the Mississippi river. Although avian cholera outbreaks can occur anytime of the year, outbreaks are more often seen in the fall, winter and early spring. Ducks, geese and swans are the most common casualty of avian cholera, other species that are affected include coots, gulls, cormorants, loons, grebes and crows. It is likely that all bird species are susceptible to some degree to this disease but other species of water birds, song birds, game birds and scavengers are less commonly associated with large scale die offs.

How is it spread?

Avian cholera is spread through various routes, the most common being ingestion of the bacteria from contaminated water or food supplies or consumption of diseased carcasses. Other routes of transmission include direct contact with an infected individual, aerosolized bacteria from splashing water or mechanical vectors.

What are some clinical signs of disease?

This is an acute disease with most birds being found dead. Large congregations of dead birds or dead birds that are found and appear relatively healthy can indicate an avian cholera outbreak. If clinical signs are observed, they can include lethargy, discharge from beak, mouth or eyes, convulsions, erratic behavior or inability to take flight.

How does this disease affect me?

Avian cholera is not associated with human disease. Birds that die of avian cholera are not suitable for human consumption.

Information for outdoor recreationists:

If avian cholera is suspected contact your local biologist. Successful management of this disease depends on early detection and prompt control measures.

For additional information on avian cholera or any other wildlife disease, please contact the WGFD Wildlife Health Laboratory at 307-745-5865.