

Kansas Department of Agriculture Insure Poultry Health

County fair season is kicking off in Kansas, and it is important to ensure the health of your animals, including exhibits in the poultry barn. Pullorum -Typhoid disease can affect chickens, turkeys, quail, guinea fowl, pheasants, peafowl, grouse, parrots, sparrows, ostriches and ring-necked doves.

“As we enter county and state fair season, it is important to have your birds tested for pullorum -typhoid disease,” said Dr. Paul Grosdidier, with the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA). “We look forward to working with 4-H exhibitors and their families each year to help keep their chickens and fowl healthy. All poultry exhibitors must have proof their birds are Pullorum-Typhoid clean at public shows.”

Last year, the KDA Division of Animal Health and the USDA tested more than 2,500 birds in more than 30 Kansas counties. All of the birds were Pullorum-Typhoid free. Anyone who qualifies as a certified blood testing agent can perform blood tests on the poultry.

To test for Pullorum-Typhoid, blood is drawn from the bird and thoroughly mixed with a drop of antigen. The antigen is a purple-colored solution, which will agglutinate with antibodies if a bird is infected.

If a bird is a positive reactor, the bird - and the entire flock - will be quarantined. Blood test results are then sent to the Kansas State Veterinary Diagnostic Lab for further testing. If the bird is positive for pullorum, further action will be necessary to eradicate the infection.

Pullorum-Typhoid disease belongs to a large family of bacteria called Salmonella. The disease is primarily transmitted from generation to generation via infected hens. Infected birds tend to peck at infected eggs and pass the infection to the embryo in the egg. Other forms of transmission include inhalation or contact with contaminated water, feed, dust, down or infected materials in the incubator, shipping container, brooder and pen.

Infected adult birds may show reduced productivity, but otherwise show little to no physical or clinical signs of pullorum. Infected eggs or poults simply do not hatch or have a significant death loss after the first few weeks of hatching. Chicks and poults develop signs such as weakness, loss of appetite, drooping wings, dehydration and ruffled feathers.

For an infection-free breeding flock, birds should be purchased from certified infection-free stock or tested before adding them to a flock. Bird owners are encouraged to always keep bird pens and facilities clean with fresh food and water. For public health, remember to wash your hands thoroughly after handling birds, especially before eating or drinking.

For more information on animal health programs at KDA, contact the agency at (785) 564-6700.