



Topic 8. Poultry and Waterfowl

Poultry and waterfowl are commonly kept in small and backyard operations and are often managed together due to space, housing, or husbandry considerations. From a biosecurity perspective, these species share many environmental interfaces, particularly with wild birds, water sources, and outdoor areas, which can influence disease risk.

Birds are uniquely mobile compared to other livestock species, and both domestic poultry and waterfowl may have indirect contact with wild birds through shared airspace, water, soil, or feed areas. Waterfowl, in particular, may interact more frequently with surface water or damp environments, which can serve as points of contact with wildlife. Biosecurity education emphasizes understanding these interfaces rather than assuming they can be fully eliminated.

Mixed-species housing or shared ranging areas are common in small operations, even though separation is often described as an ideal scenario. Educational materials acknowledge this reality and focus on awareness of how shared spaces, equipment, and water sources may affect disease pathways. Understanding where and how birds interact with each other and their environment supports more informed observation and decision-making.

Health monitoring plays an important role in poultry and waterfowl biosecurity. Changes in behavior, movement, posture, appetite, or flock dynamics may provide early indications of stress or illness. In small flocks, close daily observation often allows caretakers to notice subtle changes that might be missed in larger systems. Linking these observations with basic records can help preserve context over time.

Biosecurity education for poultry and waterfowl focuses on recognizing common pathways of exposure, including wildlife contact, environmental conditions, and shared resources. Rather than prescribing specific management practices, educational approaches emphasize understanding why these species may face certain risks and how those risks fit into the broader biosecurity picture of an operation.

References

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