

Recommendations to wildlife rehabilitators to reduce Newcastle disease transmission risk.

In light of the finding of virulent Newcastle Disease Virus (vNDV) in double-crested cormorants, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), and Florida Department of Health have provided the following recommendations for wildlife rehabilitators.

If you receive double-crested cormorants with wing or leg paralysis (often one-sided), clenching of toes, twisting of the neck, and/or head tremors or weaving then:

- 1) Immediately contact FWC (Dan Wolf 352-334-4235, dan.wolf@myfwc.com Mark Cunningham, 352-494-4229), mark.cunningham@myfwc.com; or FDACS (rad@freshfromflorida.com, 850-410-0900 during business hours or 800-342-5869 after hours), or USDA (vsfl@usda.gov or call 352-333-3060 during business hours), and enter the information into the bird mortality database <http://myfwc.com/bird>. State law requires the immediate reporting of suspected vNDV to agriculture officials.
- 2) We recommend immediate euthanasia of any neurologic cormorants. Cormorants recovering from vNDV often have permanent neurologic deficits and are unreleasable. Carcasses should be handled per instructions (3.k) below.
- 3) If a live but neurologic cormorant is to be admitted to the facility:
 - a. House indoors in its own cage in a separate room.
 - b. Have designated personnel taking care of only the affected cormorant(s). If this is not possible, personnel should care for other birds before handling/treating cormorants.
 - c. Personnel caring for affected cormorants should not handle or be around domestic poultry, and poultry should not be housed at the rehab facility.**
 - d. Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (gloves, Tyvek suits if available or coveralls, disposable N-95 respirator, eye protection, and boots), and use good hand washing practices.
 - e. Have a foot bath with disinfectant at room entrance/exit. Foot baths should not be placed in direct sunlight and should be refilled regularly or when ineffective. Animals should not have access to content of foot baths. The use of open-toed shoes in a foot bath is greatly discouraged.
 - f. Shower and change clothing after handling the cormorants.
 - g. vNDV can cause a mild self-limiting conjunctivitis (pink eye) in humans. Mild fever with headache that lasts only a day or two also has rarely been reported. Wear eye protection and contact your health care provider if eye irritation occurs. Those experiencing these symptoms may be infectious to birds for up to a week after symptoms began so should accordingly avoid contact with birds during this time.
 - h. Wash well after handling birds and thoroughly disinfect cages (10% bleach solution).
 - i. The virus is primarily transmitted in the feces, and contaminated cage liners should be double-bagged for disposal.
 - j. Do not transport affected birds from one facility to another.
 - k. Carcasses should be double-bagged and saved in a freezer not used for food. Contact FWC or FDACS at the numbers above for disposal. Birds not fitting the case description here may be disposed of in a safe manner per local regulations.
- 4) Please also contact the agencies above if you receive reports of large bird die-offs or experience unusual mortality events within your facility; contact FWC if you receive gulls or pelicans with the neurological signs mentioned above.
- 5) If you have any questions or concerns please contact Dan Wolf (352-334-4235) or Mark Cunningham (352-334-4233).