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Exotic Newcastle waning in California, but quarantines remain

Jul 21, 2003 (CIDRAP News) –Exotic Newcastle disease (END) is disappearing from southern California's poultry flocks after a 9-month battle, but quarantines on the affected counties will probably remain for several more months, according to an official with the state's END Task Force.

No poultry farms or backyard flocks under surveillance in the quarantined counties are known to still harbor the disease, Adrian Woodfork, a California Department of Food and Agriculture spokesman who works with the END task force, told CIDRAP News.

More than 6,000 sites have been released from individual quarantine, meaning the operators can rebuild their flocks, according to Woodfork. But more than 10,700 sites remain under quarantine, he said. And birds still can't be moved out of or into the quarantined counties without a federal permit. The counties are Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Ventura, Santa Barbara, Imperial, and part of Kern.

"We'll lift the [regional] quarantine when it becomes consistent in our surveillance and testing efforts that there are no more positive results coming back," Woodfork said. "How long that is going to be has not really been determined. But at the rate we're going, we're hoping it's going to be a matter of months."

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A ban on poultry exhibitions, including poultry displays and sales at fairs, swap meets, and pet stores, remains in effect, he said.

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Overview

The last of 22 commercial poultry farms was released from quarantine last week, Woodfork said. The farms can rebuild their flocks, but the birds will be tested on a weekly basis until the regional quarantine is lifted, he said.

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The last time any birds were destroyed in the effort to contain the fatal disease was May 31, Woodfork said. About 3,016,000 birds have been destroyed since the containment battle began last October, according to the END Task Force Web site. That compares with 12 million birds destroyed in California's END crisis of 1971, Woodfork said.

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About 600 people are currently working for the END task force, down from a peak of 1,700 earlier in the outbreak, according to Woodfork. "So we're in the winding down stage for sure," he said.

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General Info

The task force has spent \$158 million fighting the disease in California, according to a Jul 19 report in the online edition of the *North County Times*, a San Diego County newspaper.

Irradiation

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Although END is usually fatal for poultry, it poses no threat to public health and does not affect the safety of poultry or eggs as food, according to health officials.

See also:

California Department of Food and Agriculture END page
http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/Newcastle_info.htm

[CIDRAP overview on END](#)