

Measles Outbreak Information from the Anson Health Department

Disease has been in the news so much lately. First Ebola, then Influenza and now Measles. In the year 2000 Measles was eliminated from the United States. This was accomplished because of the very effective measles vaccination program in the US. One dose of measles vaccine is about 93% effective at preventing measles if exposed to the virus and two doses is about 97% effective.

Since 2000 in the US, the annual number of measles cases ranged from 37 in 2004 to 644 people in 2014. Experts from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) attribute this increase in cases to:

- 1) More measles cases than usual in some countries to which Americans often travel (such as England, France, Germany, India, the Philippines and Vietnam), and therefore more measles cases coming into the US, and/or
- 2) More spreading of measles in U.S. communities with pockets of unvaccinated people.

Measles can be a serious illness in all age groups. However, children younger than 5 years of age and adults older than 20 years of age are more likely to suffer from measles complications.

- Ear infections occur in about one out of every 10 children with measles and can result in permanent hearing loss.
- Diarrhea is reported in less than one out of 10 people with measles.
- As many as one out of every 20 children with measles gets pneumonia, the most common cause of death from measles in young children.
- About one child out of every 1,000 who get measles will develop encephalitis (swelling of the brain) that can lead to convulsions and can leave the child deaf or mentally retarded.
- For every 1,000 children who get measles, one or two will die from it.

Below is a chart from the NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). All children in North Carolina must be vaccinated against certain diseases. Immunization records are checked when a child enters a child care center or school. North Carolina does allow for medical and religious exemptions from vaccination but there is no exemption for personal beliefs.

By This Age:	Children Need These Shots:					
3 months	1 DTaP	1 Polio	1 Hib		1 Hep B	1 PCV***
5 months	2 DTaP	2 Polio	2 Hib		2 Hep B	2 PCV***
7 months	3 DTaP	2 Polio	2-3 Hib		2 Hep B	3 PCV***
12-16 months	3 DTaP	2 Polio	3-4 Hib	1 MMR	2 Hep B	1 Var+ 4 PCV***
19 months	4 DTaP	3 Polio	3-4 Hib	1 MMR	3 Hep B	1 Var+ 4 PCV***
4 years or older (in daycare only)	4 DTaP	3 Polio	3-4 Hib	1 MMR	3 Hep B	1 Var+ 4 PCV***
4 years and older (and in kindergarten)	5 DTaP	4 Polio	3-4 Hib	2 MMR	3 Hep B	2 Var+ 4 PCV***

Wadesboro. Call your provider or call 704-694-5188 for an appointment for vaccination or testing for immunity. Thank you."

Feather Loss in Backyard Flocks

Do your chickens look like they need the Hair Club for Hens? Chickens loose feathers for a variety of reasons, and most loss is just part of the normal cycle of poultry life.

Chickens naturally drop feathers as part of the molting process that occurs when a hen comes to the end of her laying cycle. For a normally lighted, in season bird, that cycle starts in late December or early January, and lasts for about six to eight weeks. During this time hens drop a few feathers a day and start re-growing them in the order they are lost. This process is fairly specific, starting with the primary wing feathers.

While molting, egg laying is greatly decreased and usually stops. But since each hen is operating on her own cycle, if your flock is large enough or you have mixed ages or breeds, you may maintain some egg production.

If you have a rooster in your flock, the mating process can also lead to some feather loss, though this typically occurs on the backs and necks of the hens. If your flock is losing feathers from the vent area (chicken posteriors) or ruffling like debris, they may have lice or mites.

When you notice blood, see whole feathers, or hear or see birds pulling feathers from one another, then you have a social issue to deal with. Feather picking can be a tough problem to solve, but like many things, the sooner you realize it is occurring and take action, the easier it is to stop most of the time. Birds may pick feathers for a variety of reasons, so there is no one silver bullet approach to stopping it. Many of the cures can be utilized to prevent it from becoming an issue in the first place.

First, space is often a contributing factor. Make sure chickens have at least two square feet of floor space if in constant confinement. If they have access to a run or yard for several hours, the coop can be smaller. Make sure to maintain adequate feeder, drinker and nest space. As well, each bird should have 3-4 inches of feeder and drinker space and a nest box for each 3-4 hens. Allow 6-8 inches of roost space also if your setup utilizes roosting poles.

Many have heard of the term "pecking order." Well chickens are social animals, and this is their system of hierarchy. Establishing this dominance can lead to some feather picking. Upsetting this order by introducing new birds, or having several birds in a pen in a first place to some birds being bullied. Some times there are only one or two birds doing the damage, and if you can identify the offenders, isolation or permanent removal can bring peace to the flock.

Finally, as with most of nature, there are some breeds that are more likely to pick feathers than others, and examining the parent flock is a good indicator of how the chicks will develop.

By Richard Goforth, Area Poultry Agent

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