Infectious Laryngotracheitis (ILT)

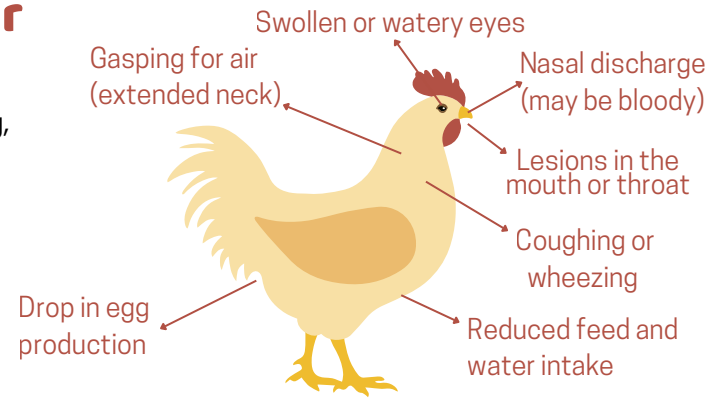
SMALL FLOCKS COLLABORATIVE

Infectious Laryngotracheitis (ILT) is a serious, **contagious respiratory disease** caused by a virus. It mainly affects chickens but can also infect pheasants and peafowl. It spreads through respiratory droplets, direct bird-to-bird contact, and contaminated equipment. Signs include watery eyes, coughing, gasping for air, or sudden death. **Infected, recovered, or vaccinated birds can carry and spread the virus** without signs. **There is no cure** for ILT, prevention through good biosecurity is key.

Signs to Look For

ILT looks like other respiratory diseases. Watch for coughing, gasping, neck stretching, or sudden death.

Testing is the only way to confirm disease.



Quick Facts

- ILT is caused by a herpesvirus
- Spreads quickly, and can cause high mortality in chicken flocks
- Gamebirds and peafowl can be infected, but ILT is rare in turkeys
- Does **not** spread to or infect humans
- Spreads through infected birds, contaminated surfaces, and coughing or nasal discharge

How ILT Spreads

Contact with infected birds:

- Infect birds and shed virus in saliva, nasal discharge, eye secretions, and respiratory droplets
- Carrier birds can appear healthy but still shed the virus

Contact with contaminated surfaces:

- Sharing tools, waterers, or bedding from infected flocks
- Inhaling virus in dust or dander

Note mouth lesions and swollen eyes

Prevention

1. Practice Biosecurity

- Always limit contact with birds from other flocks to prevent disease spread.
- Wear coop-dedicated shoes to keep out germs.
- Wash hands and keep coop/equipment clean.

2. Separate New or Returning Birds

- Isolate new or returning birds for at least 3 weeks and monitor for signs of illness.
- Germs can spread before birds show signs.
- Birds that have recovered from or were vaccinated for ILT may carry and spread the virus.

3. Limit Visitors and Shared Tools

- Limit visitors and require boot covers.
- Avoid sharing or borrowing tools or equipment.

4. Handle Healthy Birds First

- Care for birds in this order: young → adults → sick, to avoid spreading germs.
- Wash or sanitize hands and equipment between different bird groups.

When Birds Get Sick

1. Work with a Veterinarian

- ILT is reportable in some states.
- Your veterinarian can help confirm the disease and guide next steps.

2. Isolate Sick Birds

- Separate sick birds from the flock to limit spread of the virus.

3. Don't Spread Disease

- Do not buy or sell birds during or after an outbreak.
- Even healthy-looking birds can shed this virus.

4. Confirm with Testing

- Testing can identify the cause of illness and help guide your next steps.
- Work with your veterinarian to coordinate testing.

5. Plan Long-Term Management

- Infected birds remain carriers, so some flocks may choose to depopulate their flock.
- If ILT is reportable in your state, there may be additional management requirements.

Find out more at
www.healthybirds.info