



Poultry Flock Health Visits

AUGUST 2017

ANIMAL HEALTH UNIT

Animal Health Unit

The Animal Health Unit is responsible for health monitoring and diagnosis of disease in wildlife and domestic animals in Yukon. The staff provide expertise in laboratory services and in veterinary medicine to support public health and animal protection.

The Animal Health Unit and laboratory are at 10 Burns Road, Whitehorse, Yukon.

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What is a flock health visit?

Flock health visits provide farmers with an opportunity to work with a veterinarian to evaluate animal health concerns and management activities on-farm. Flock health visits are generally scheduled appointments; however, they can be combined with veterinary visits for sick or injured animals. Funds are provided through the Yukon government's Veterinary Services Program to cover the cost of a flock health visit.

Why are flock health visits important?

- ▶ They provide an opportunity to improve the health and production of your birds by minimizing the effects of disease and production-limiting conditions.
- ▶ They allow for comparison of animal production records and continuous improvement over time.
- ▶ They provide veterinary expertise for improvement of farm management practices including nutrition, housing and biosecurity.
- ▶ They increase the value of future veterinary visits because the veterinarian has a better understanding of your farm.
- ▶ They allow a veterinarian to observe your birds in their home environment, which plays a very important role in their overall health.

What happens during a flock health visit?

Depending on the size of your farm and production system, a flock health visit will usually take between an hour to half a day. During the visit, a veterinarian and farmer will evaluate birds, the farm environment and farm records together. This may include:

- ▶ Birds:
 - Current and past health and disease issues
 - Disease prevention practices (i.e., vaccination and parasite control)
 - Parent flock information, for example:
 - Vaccines and deworming given
 - Flock health status
 - Visual and/or physical exam of birds
- ▶ Environment:
 - Farm location and proximity to wildlife and/or other domestic animals
 - Indoor and outdoor animal housing areas
 - Quarantine or sick animal areas
 - Bedding and forage materials
 - Feed and water supply, cleaning and storage

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Veterinary Services Program

As part of the Yukon Livestock Health Program, the Veterinary Services Program provides up to \$1,000 per farm premise to cover the fees charged by a veterinarian to travel to/from your farm, for their professional services, and for phone consultations. Livestock owners are encouraged to register by contacting the Animal Health Unit at 1-800-661-0408, ext. 5600 or animalhealth@gov.yk.ca for more information.



Who participates in a flock health visit?

- ▶ A flock health visit is organized by a farmer with a veterinarian.
- ▶ If possible, include all employees and family involved in animal care.
- ▶ Ideally, visits should occur regularly (at least once per year) with a veterinarian who is familiar with your farm.

- ▶ Records:
 - Health documents for incoming birds
 - Production measures:
 - Egg production
 - Bird weight gain
 - Feed consumption
 - Health, mortality, treatment and slaughter records
- ▶ Biosecurity:
 - Farm visitor and delivery practices and records
 - New and sick bird quarantine practices
 - Cleaning and disinfection methods
 - Material and equipment sources and sharing
 - Pest control
 - Bird movement records

What is a flock health program?

During a flock health visit, the veterinarian can help you develop a health program specific to your farm called a **flock health program**. Flock health programs aim to provide a high level of animal care and reduce production losses from management problems or disease. Flock health programs are designed specifically for individual farms and may include plans for:

- ▶ Feeding and nutrition management;
- ▶ Housing management;
- ▶ Vaccination and parasite control;
- ▶ Disease treatment;
- ▶ Cleaning and disinfection;
- ▶ Reproductive management;
- ▶ Biosecurity and food safety; and
- ▶ Recordkeeping systems.

How do I arrange and prepare for a flock health visit?

A small amount of preparation will help you get the most value from a flock health visit. For example:

- ▶ Contact a veterinarian to schedule an appointment and ask if they have any special instructions.
- ▶ Make a list of current bird health or management concerns.
- ▶ Prepare farm records (if applicable) for the veterinarian to review.
- ▶ Have current medicines and treatment products available.
- ▶ Ensure clear access and good lighting in bird housing areas.

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