

LT / VLT --

Laryngotracheitis / Vaccinal Laryngotracheitis

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What is it? Infectious Laryngotracheitis (LT) or Vaccinal Laryngotracheitis (VLT – caused by the vaccine strain) is an infectious respiratory viral disease of chickens. LT can also affect pheasants and peafowl.

What are the signs of disease? This disease is usually seen in older chickens (> 5 weeks of age). Chickens can show mild to severe respiratory signs including watery eyes, nasal discharge, facial swelling, coughing, sneezing, wheezing (whistle) and shaking heads to dislodge pus plugs in windpipe. Birds may extend their head and attempt open-mouth breathing. In severe forms, the birds appear to be coughing up blood. Mortality (death rate) can vary between 10-70% of the infected flock depending on severity of the virus. Egg production and feed consumption will decrease. Clinical signs usually develop 6-12 days after initial infection of the virus. These clinical signs are seen in other viral and bacteria diseases, so a complete laboratory diagnosis is needed.

How is the disease diagnosed? Through flock history, clinical signs, gross lesions, microscopic examination of tracheal and eyelid tissues, and isolation of the organism from respiratory tissues performed at a veterinary diagnostic laboratory.

How is the disease transmitted? LT / VLT is spread through direct contact with infected live or dead chickens or indirect contact through contaminated manure/litter, equipment, buildings and human traffic (contaminated clothing, shoes, tires, etc.). Some types LT vaccines (VLT = Vaccinal Laryngotracheitis) can cause disease to unvaccinated chickens and spread to other farms similar to the “wild” strains of LT.

How is the disease prevented? Biosecurity-Biosecurity-Biosecurity! Prevent introduction onto the farm by keeping a closed flock and practicing biosecurity – disease prevention management – whether you have a commercial poultry farm or backyard chickens (also see www.SCAgWatch.com):

- **Birds** – Keep a closed flock. Do not bring birds from poultry shows, auctions or untested sources back to the farm – this is a great way to introduce any disease. Separate new birds away from the flock for 2-4 weeks to see if they show any signs of disease. Take sick or fresh dead birds to a diagnostic lab to determine cause of illness or death.
- **People** – Avoid visiting other poultry farms or live-bird shows & auctions. If you do, shower and change clothing and footwear before working with your birds. Don't allow people who have birds to visit your farm without showering and changing clothes beforehand or have them wear protective clothing and footwear and visa versa.
- **Equipment/Vehicle** – Do not loan or borrow equipment or vehicles from other farms. If you have to, wash and disinfect all equipment before and after use. Wash and disinfect your vehicle/trailers/crates (including tires and undercarriage) after leaving a poultry farm, show or auction. Keep your houses/pens, equipment and work areas clean and sanitary.

How is the disease controlled? Biosecurity-Biosecurity-Biosecurity! Quarantine farm, restrict movement of birds, manure and equipment, tighten farm biosecurity, and remove unnecessary human traffic. This virus can be inactivated by heat and disinfectants (phenols, sodium hypochlorite, iodophors, quats). Contaminated manure/litter should be heated and building/equipment surfaces washed and then disinfected. Depending on the situation, the farm and/or area may be vaccinated to prevent further spread. LT vaccination is only allowed with approval from the SC State Veterinarian's Office.

Public Health implications? No public health risk.