

NEWCASTLE DISEASE IN CORMORANTS: September 2018

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) and the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) recently received confirmation from the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin that two Double-crested Cormorants (see attached photo) tested positive for Newcastle disease. MassWildlife and its partner agencies received reports detailing an unusual pattern of illness and mortality in Double-crested Cormorants on coastal beaches. The majority of these birds have been found on Cape Cod in the towns of Provincetown, Wellfleet, Truro, and Chatham. Some birds have been found in other Cape towns, and along the Coast of Plymouth County. Two birds from Plymouth and Barnstable Counties were sent to the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin where they tested positive for Newcastle Disease. This viral disease can infect domestic chickens and turkeys, causing high mortality. Newcastle disease has been known to sicken and kill domestic poultry. We would like to take all necessary steps to prevent the spread of disease from wild birds to the domestic population.



Risks to humans: Although Newcastle Disease can be highly contagious to a wide range of bird species, it rarely causes disease in people. A very mild and self-limiting conjunctivitis (an eye infection) has occasionally been reported by people working directly with infected birds. As a precaution, people who are working directly with birds that might be infected should wear disposable exam gloves and protective eyewear such as safety glasses, to help protect against accidental splatter. Members of the public are discouraged from handling birds directly for the protection of the animals.

For additional information about this virus please see the fact sheet produced by the USDA at the following link:

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/fs-vnd.pdf

If you have observed sick or dead cormorants please contact Mass Wildlife directly at 508-389-6355 or the Department of Agricultural Resources at 617-626-1795.