

# Pigeon Rotavirus

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Animal Biosecurity

## What is pigeon rotavirus?

Pigeon rotavirus emerged in 2016 and is a highly infectious disease impacting on racing and non-racing pigeons in several states, including NSW.

Rotavirus infection can result in high mortality rates in lofts over a short period.

Clinical signs in affected birds have included depression, vomiting, diarrhoea, regurgitation and hunched postures. Birds that appeared sick usually died within 12 to 24 hours, with deaths in affected lofts continuing for approximately 7 days.

## Biosecurity recommendations

The pigeon industry is advised to implement biosecurity measures to prevent the spread of pigeon rotavirus.

- Avoid mixing pigeons (e.g. racing, shows, sales) from unaffected and affected lofts.
- Pigeon fanciers whose loft has been affected should maintain strict biosecurity measures, including (but not limited to) not selling pigeons to unaffected lofts, loft hygiene and visitor restrictions to prevent disease spread.
- Pigeon fanciers in unaffected areas should maintain strict biosecurity measures, including (but not limited to):
  - no pigeon introductions from affected lofts.
  - cleaning and disinfection of second hand equipment.
  - visitor restrictions.
  - cleaning of clothing/boots after contact with other pigeons to prevent the entry and spread of the disease.

Additional general biosecurity advice for bird owners is available from the [Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au).

## Movements of pigeons

There are no regulated movement restrictions in place for movement of pigeons within or into NSW.

## What to do if you suspect pigeon rotavirus in your flock

Rotavirus infection in domestic pigeons is not notifiable in NSW and does not need to be reported to the government.

Contact your private veterinarian if you suspect rotavirus in your pigeons.

Testing of samples from domestic pigeons is available at the NSW Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratories at the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute, but is done on a user pays basis and not funded by the NSW Department of Primary Industries. Samples can only be submitted by a veterinarian.

## Diagnostic sampling advice for veterinarians

### a) Live birds

- collect tracheal and cloacal swabs and place in viral transport medium or sterile saline

### b) Dead birds

- collect tracheal and cloacal swabs and place in viral transport media or sterile saline AND
- samples of fresh tissues, including liver, kidney, or spleen, plus a range of fixed tissues in neutral buffered formalin OR
- a whole bird for necropsy.

***Please note: swabs submitted in bacterial transport media are unsuitable for testing for pigeon rotavirus infection.***

Always submit your samples to the laboratory with a completed [Veterinary Specimen Advice form](#).

If you require further information about sampling or submission, please contact the NSW Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratories on 1800 675 623 or [visit the website](#).

## Pigeon rotavirus vaccine

Industry is currently developing a vaccine. When the vaccine is available, consult your avian veterinarian for advice on using the vaccine to protect your birds.

## Pigeon rotavirus and other bird populations

There is no current evidence that pigeon rotavirus affects poultry or birds other than pigeons.

Feral (non-native) pigeons are likely to be susceptible to the virus.

It is unknown what impact pigeon rotavirus may have on native pigeon populations, and NSW DPI undertakes pigeon rotavirus testing in wild birds.

If you see unusual signs of disease or deaths in a wild or native pigeon please contact your Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) State Coordinator. Contact details for your state WHA Coordinator can be found on the [WHA website](#).

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