

MAREK'S DISEASE IN CHICKENS

SYMPTOMS, PREVENTION & CARE

Marek's disease is a highly contagious viral disease that can cause paralysis, tumors, and sudden death in chickens. There is no cure, but vaccination and good biosecurity can protect your flock.

No cure exists – prevention is key!

WHAT IS MAREK'S DISEASE?

Marek's disease is caused by *Gallid alphaherpesvirus 2* (GaHV-2), a herpesvirus that affects the nervous system, organs, skin, eyes, and immune system of chickens.



WHO IS AT RISK?

- ✓ 6–30 week old chickens
- ✓ Unvaccinated birds
- ✓ Heritage breeds
- ✓ Backyard & exhibition birds



HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

The virus spreads through microscopic feather dander from infected birds.



Contaminated dust & dander



Feeders, drinkers & equipment



Bedding, coop surfaces & nests

KEY FACT

The virus is very hardy and can survive in poultry houses for months.



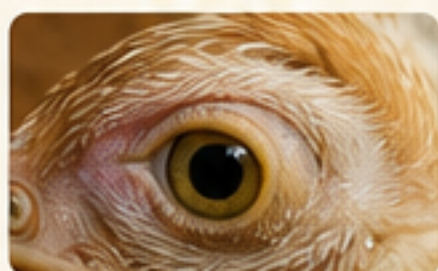
SYMPTOMS TO WATCH FOR

NERVOUS FORM



Paralysis (one leg forward, one back), drooping wings, loss of balance, weakness.

EYE FORM



Grey or cloudy eyes, irregular pupils, blindness, poor vision.

TUMOR FORM



Tumors in organs such as the liver, spleen, kidneys, heart, lungs, or ovaries.

SKIN FORM



Small raised tumors around feather follicles.

GENERAL SIGNS

- Weight loss
- Pale comb
- Poor growth
- Reduced appetite
- Depression
- Sudden death



! Symptoms can vary. Some birds may look healthy before suddenly dying.

PREVENTION IS ESSENTIAL

- ✓ Buy vaccinated chicks from reputable hatcheries.
- ✓ Quarantine new birds for at least 30 days.
- ✓ Keep the coop clean and dust-free.
- ✓ Avoid overcrowding and reduce stress.
- ✓ Practice good biosecurity every day.



VACCINATION: YOUR BEST DEFENSE



- ✓ Most chicks are vaccinated on the day they hatch (or in-ovo).
- ✓ Vaccination greatly reduces the risk of disease.
- ✓ Vaccinated birds can still carry and shed the virus but are far less likely to become sick.

Vaccinate early – before exposure!

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR FLOCK IS EXPOSED

- 1 Monitor all birds daily for 6–8 weeks.
- 2 Remove sick birds and isolate if possible.
- 3 Keep housing clean and reduce dust.
- 4 Provide good nutrition, clean water, and reduce stress.
- 5 Do not introduce new birds.
- 6 Consult a veterinarian for guidance.



BIOSECURITY BEST PRACTICES



Change footwear before entering poultry areas.



Wash hands after handling birds or equipment.



Limit visitors to your flock.



Clean & disinfect feeders, drinkers & equipment.



Ensure good ventilation in your coop.



Remove worn bedding and manure regularly.

CAN HUMANS CATCH MAREK'S DISEASE?

No. Marek's disease does not infect humans and eggs from healthy hens are safe to eat when properly handled and cooked.

