

The surveillance and control programme for infectious laryngotracheitis (ILT) and avian rhinotracheitis (ART) in poultry flocks in Norway

Bruce David

Katrine Sønneland Håland

Chiek Er



Editor Ann-Charlotte Karlsson

Technical editor Hanne Mari Jordsmyr

Scientific editors Hege Hellberg and Ståle Sviland

National Veterinary Institute



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National Veterinary Institute
PO Box 750 Sentrum
N-0106 Oslo
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Fax: + 47 23 21 60 01
Tel: + 47 23 21 60 00
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Surveillance in 2009 did not detect infectious laryngotracheitis (ILT) in chicken nor avian rhinotracheitis (ART) in turkeys.

Introduction

The Norwegian Food Safety Authority is responsible for the implementation of the surveillance and control programmes for infectious laryngotracheitis (ILT) and avian rhinotracheitis (ART) in chicken and turkey flocks, respectively. Started in 1998, these programmes are based on serological investigations. The National Veterinary Institute in Oslo is responsible for the planning, laboratory investigations and the reporting components of the programmes.

ILT is a severe respiratory disease in chickens that is seen in commercial chickens in most parts of the world, including most European countries (1). However, ILT has not been diagnosed in commercial chicken flocks in Norway since 1971, although clinical outbreaks of ILT have occurred sporadically in Norwegian hobby flocks since 1998 (2).

ART is a highly contagious infection which affects the upper respiratory passages of poultry. The disease is caused by avian pneumovirus (APV), and has been diagnosed in most countries (1) and sporadically in our neighbouring countries. ART had never been diagnosed in Norwegian poultry until the national surveillance and control programmes for ART demonstrated the presence of antibodies against APV in 2003 and 2004 in one broiler breeder farm and one layer breeder farm. The diagnosis for ART in these flocks was based on serology only, like in many other countries (1). As the use of stamping out measures was unable to control the spread of the infection, chickens were excluded from the national surveillance and control programme for ART as of May 2005.

Aims

The aims of the national surveillance and control programmes for ILT and ART is to document that the commercial poultry populations in Norway are free of these infections, and to contribute to the maintenance of this status.

Materials and methods

According to the national regulations for certification of poultry breeding farms (3), blood samples from 60 birds must be taken at least once a year from every breeding flock at the farms. These blood samples are to be tested for Newcastle disease, as Norway is a non-vaccinating country. Thirty of the 60 samples from chicken and turkey flocks are included in the national surveillance and control programmes for ILT and ART, respectively. In addition, forty randomly chosen turkey flocks are sampled at slaughter for ART. Flocks with single positive reactions are followed up by repeated sampling, and if false positive results can't be ruled out by this procedure, serum samples with a positive reaction in the ELISA-tests are submitted to the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA), Weybridge, England for testing using virus neutralisation tests.

ILT

An indirect ELISA-test produced by Synbiotics, was used for the testing of antibodies against the ILT-virus.

ART

All serum samples were tested for specific antibodies against APV with a blocking-ELISA produced by SVANOVA, Uppsala, Sweden.



Photo: Colourbox

Table 1. Number of farms, flocks and birds tested in the surveillance and control programmes for laryngotracheitis (ILT) in chickens and avian rhinotracheitis (ART) in turkey in 2009.

Production line	No. of farms tested	No. of flocks tested	Total no. of birds tested	Flocks with seropositive samples
<i>Infectious laryngotracheitis</i>				
Broiler	85	108	3,218	0
Layer	12	15	420	0
<i>Avian rhinotracheitis</i>				
Turkey	31	31	790	0

Results

All 3,638 blood samples analysed in the surveillance programme for ILT were negative. All 790 blood samples analysed in the surveillance programme for ART were negative.

Table 1 shows the number of farms, flocks and birds tested in the different poultry production types in the national surveillance and control programme for ILT in 2009.

Discussion

Antibodies against ILT are often found in samples from hobby flocks. It is thus of major importance that commercial poultry flocks are kept strictly isolated from hobby birds and backyard poultry flocks. The non-commercial bird populations are complex, and pose a problem for the control of this contagious poultry disease due to the difficulties associated with performing systematic disease surveillance in such bird populations.

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Surveillance in 2009 did not detect infectious laryngotracheitis (ILT) in chicken nor avian rhinotracheitis (ART) in turkeys. Photo: Colourbox

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The National Veterinary Institute has its main laboratory in Oslo, with regional laboratories in Sandnes, Bergen, Trondheim, Harstad og Tromsø, with about 360 employees in total.

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The Norwegian Food Safety Authority (NFSA) is a governmental body whose aim is to ensure through regulations and controls that food and drinking water are as safe and healthy as possible for consumers and to promote plant, fish and animal health and ethical farming of fish and animals. We encourage environmentally friendly production and we also regulate and control cosmetics, veterinary medicines and animal health personnel. The NFSA drafts and provides information on legislation, performs risk-based inspections, monitors food safety, plant, fish and animal health, draws up contingency plans and provides updates on developments in our field of competence.

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The NFSA advises and reports to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs and the Ministry of Health and Care Services.

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