



## Raising Backyard Poultry: What Vaccines do I need?

Vaccines are an important and effective way to make chickens less susceptible to various diseases. A vaccination program will vary on the risk of exposure to various diseases based on several factors including:

- Species
- Type (broilers/layers/breeders)
- Geographical location and geographical poultry density
- Biosecurity
- Mixed species/types/ages of poultry vs 'all-in-all-out' scenarios
- Number of birds and on-farm density
- Farm disease history
- Etc.

### MAREK'S DISEASE

Marek's Disease is a common viral disease of chickens with a worldwide distribution and is ubiquitous in the environment where chickens are grown. Most chickens are exposed to Marek's at some point in their life and may or may not have symptoms of the disease but chickens between the ages of 12 and 25 weeks are the most susceptible. Clinical signs can range from severe depression and mortality in acute cases to partial or complete paralysis of the legs/wings in the classical form. Viral tumors can be found in various organs at necropsy. Chickens with clinical signs will not recover and should be humanely euthanized. C&D and Biosecurity are important to help prevent the disease from spreading. Marek's Disease is very stable in feather dander and virus can remain on the farm for long periods of time. After infection has occurred, future infections are inevitable unless new chicks are protected with vaccination.

Chicks must be vaccinated for Marek's Disease at the hatchery. ***We strongly recommend that chicks are purchased from a reputable hatchery that vaccinates for Marek's Disease.***

### FOWL POX

Fowl Pox is a viral disease that causes cutaneous lesions on unfeathered skin of the head, neck, legs and feet as well as diphtheritic lesions in the mouth, upper digestive tract and upper respiratory tract. Introduction of infected "carrier" birds into a susceptible flock can result in a disease outbreak. It is spread through direct contact as well as water/feed transmission. Mosquitoes, flies and other insects can also transmit the virus so good on-farm pest management is important. Vaccination with a live pox vaccine via wing web-stick administration can prevent the disease.

### OTHERS

Vaccines other than Marek's Disease and Fowlpox are not as commonly used in backyard flocks. They are often not indicated, because risk of exposure is often lower in backyard flock situations. Vaccination against pathogens such as Infectious Bronchitis, Newcastle Disease, Avian Encephalomyelitis, Infectious Bursal Disease, Reovirus, Infectious Laryngotracheitis, Coccidiosis and Salmonella should be considered depending on individual situations and the factors listed above.