



DAMORY LODGE EDWARD STREET BLANDFORD FORUM DORSET DT11 7QT  
TEL: 01258 452 626 FAX: 01258 453 548 EMAIL: office@damoryvets.co.uk www.damoryvets.co.uk

## **INFECTIOUS LARYNGOTRACHEITIS (ILT)**

### **CAUSE:**

Infectious Laryngotracheitis (ILT) is caused by avian herpes virus 1. Although it typically affects chickens of greater than 4 weeks of age, it can also infect turkeys and game birds. The virus itself is highly resistant outside its host, however it is easily killed with disinfectants and therefore regular disinfection of the hen house will help reduce residual levels of the virus.

### **TRANSMISSION:**

The virus is highly infectious and although usually spread through bird-to-bird contact, it can also be passed on by contact with respiratory secretions or droppings of infected birds. Both diseased and recovered birds can act as a source of infection for naïve birds.

### **SIGNS:**

Clinical signs will develop 6-12 days after exposure to the virus, however usually the first sign of infection is the sudden death of an individual bird. The disease will then spread rapidly through the flock with 50-100% of the flock becoming infected. Mortality rates are typically around 5-30% but may increase to 70% in more severe outbreaks.

Infected birds will show signs of respiratory distress and have a characteristic 'pump handle' breathing pattern. There will be a drop in egg production and birds may develop eye and nasal discharge. As the disease progresses they will start gasping due to the accumulation of fluid and mucus in their airways, which they may also cough up if severe. Less severely affected birds will recover within 3-4 weeks.

### **DIAGNOSIS:**

Diagnosis is mainly based on the history and clinical signs, however, post mortem examination is required to isolate the virus and confirm a diagnosis of ILT.

### **TREATMENT:**

As ILT is due to a virus there is no treatment. However, antibiotics should be administered to control secondary bacterial infection. Although a vaccine is available, this will not provide protection to those that have already come into contact with infected birds, however, it can be used to protect new birds that are entering the flock.