



Media Release

The Department of Primary Industries

Friday September 30, 2011

Bird ban puts pigeons in their places

New bans will be imposed on Victoria's pigeon flocks to improve the chances of containing the fatal pigeon paramyxovirus.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) will restrict pigeon movement further by banning pigeon events such as shows, exhibitions, markets, sales, auctions and racing (including tossing).

Victoria's Chief Veterinary Officer, Hugh Millar said new outbreaks of paramyxovirus (PMV1), continued to be reported in small numbers and the bans were being introduced at the request of racing, show and fancy associations.

"As of yesterday there were 35 confirmed outbreaks on infected properties," Dr Millar said.

"Loft-flying is excluded and poses a low risk as birds do not mix with other lofts to the extent apparently required to spread disease," Dr Millar said.

"PMV1, not previously reported in Australia, was found in hobby pigeons near Shepparton and in the north-western suburbs of Melbourne at the start of the month.

"It has also since been found in racing pigeons in one flock and in Melbourne's southeast.

"It is now apparent that the disease is contained to a limited population, primarily around Melbourne."

Dr Millar said a key factor in this containment had been the voluntary restrictions on aggregations and movement of pigeons implemented by racing, show and fancy associations.

"Compliance with these actions has been good but there have been exceptions so the ban will come into place as soon as possible for a period of up to 90 days," he said.

"It remains vital that owners of pigeons continue to practice good biosecurity to limit the chance of infection entering their lofts."

Affected pigeon flocks have experienced high mortality associated with lethargy, gastrointestinal and neurological signs.

Owners who notice similar signs or high death rates in their pigeons are urged to confine birds to the premises and either contact their veterinarian or call DPI on 1800 675 888 .