



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FOWL CHOLERA EPIDEMIC HITS DUCKS
WINTERING IN TEXAS PANHANDLE

An epidemic of fowl cholera has broken out among wild ducks wintering in Lamb and Bailey Counties, in the Texas Panhandle, the Fish and Wildlife Service disclosed today.

More than 150,000 migratory waterfowl normally winter in this region — resting and drinking on shallow lake basins and wet alkali mud flats, and feeding on surrounding grain fields.

Important wintering areas in the two Texas counties are the 5,800-acre Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge and the nearby Bull Lake. More than 2,500 diseased dead birds have already been recovered in these areas.

Fish and Wildlife Service research biologists are now at work in the afflicted areas. They believe the epidemic to be a problem of sanitation that can be alleviated through the cooperation of local poultry farmers. Fowl cholera is an infection common to chickens, usually created by unsanitary conditions on poultry farms.

The fowl cholera is transmitted to wild ducks, the Service biologists believe, by the decomposed bodies of diseased dead chickens, which farmers have thrown into drainage waters.

The Texas Panhandle is the only known region where fowl cholera has considerably affected migratory waterfowl. The disease was first observed in the region in 1940, and outbreaks have since occurred each winter. The current epidemic is the most serious ever recorded.

Birds infected by fowl cholera become diarrhetic, lose control of their muscles, lose their sense of direction, and become incapable of any voluntary movement, before death strikes.

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