


Poultry Science Capital Region Veterinary Science

Penn State

Poultry Pointers

Entomology Food Science



Agricultural & Biological Engineering Agricultural Economics

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It is normal for a small percentage of a poultry flock to die between one and two weeks of age from what is commonly known as starve-outs.

These chicks or poults are thin, dehydrated and have no feed in the intestinal tract (crop/gizzard particularly). Often only litter-like material is found in the gizzard. However, caution is needed not to think that all mortality during this period are starve-outs.

The reason is that a variety of viruses can infect young chicks or poults at this young age producing health problems which look very similar to starve-outs.

The best known of these viral enteric conditions is bluecomb disease of turkeys. The disease is also known as mud fever, transmissible enteritis, infectious enteritis or coronaviral enteritis. It can cause quite high mortality.

The rest of this article will discuss other viral enteric infections particularly as they pertain to turkey poults. However, one should know that these viruses, particularly rotavirus, affect a wide variety of avian species including chickens, pheasants, pigeons, ducks, guinea fowl and even pet birds.

These viral enteric infections are a complex problem as often usually more than one disease agent is involved in the outbreak.

Rotavirus is the one typically identified. However, other viruses such as astrovirus, enterovirus, parvovirus and calicivirus have also been reported in causing disease problems in young turkey poults.

A variety of secondary disease agents such as bacteria, mold (crop mycosis) and organisms such as cryptosporidia usually complicate the overall disease picture.

These viral infections in turkey poults have a variety of names.

The most popular is poult enteritis. Other names include: turkey viral enteritis, poult stunting and runtting, poult malabsorption syndrome or infectious enteritis. Sometimes it is simply called rotavirus infection.

These viral enteric outbreaks have a sudden onset, are highly infectious and the droppings will contain large quantities of the virus. The virus-containing droppings are a particular problem for turkey producers that have multi-age flocks on the farm and/or have multi-age brooding in the same building.

Because the droppings (diarrhea) are so sticky, they are easily carried from place to place (pen to pen, building to building, farm to farm). Also, birds may continue to pass droppings containing virus long after the acute disease is over.

These disease agents are environmental; that is, the young bird becomes infected by exposure to a fecal contaminated environment. The disease spreads rapidly through a flock and from flock to flock on the same farm.

The viruses causing these problems are not egg transmitted; thus, the young are not infected by the breeder hen.

The symptoms are quite variable. They may be very mild (the producer may not even be aware that the flock is infected) or very severe (with mortality).

Most outbreaks occur in birds less than 4 weeks of age, but adult birds, if not infected when young, can experience an outbreak.

Any or all of the following symptoms may be seen: dehydration, watery droppings with pasting of the vent and caking on the

feet and toes, vent picking, litter eating, poor weight (thin birds), birds seeking a source of heat and huddling together with the suffocation of some chicks.

While most of the flock is sick, fortunately, mortality is generally low — less than 4 to 7 percent.

The next article will describe the economic effects, lesions, diagnosis and prevention and treatment of these viral intestinal infections.

Everyday Effort Key To Championship

HOLLINS, Va. — Jim Funk, the winner here of Livestock Marketing Association's 1992 World Livestock Auctioneer Championship, credits his attitude with bringing him the title.

"Every day I'm behind the mike I'm competing for the world championship — I wanted it so bad," said Funk, of Edgewood, Iowa. Funk won the 29th annual WLAC in competition at the Roanoke-Hollins Stockyard. He said he wanted to salute the "great people" who sponsored him at the Spring Grove Livestock Ex-

change, Spring Grove, Minn. The reserve world champion is Greg Griffeth, Oklahoma City, and the runner-up world champion is Lex Madden, Torrington, Wyo.

Last year, in just his first time in the contest, Griffeth finished third. After his second place finish this year, there's only one title left to win. He said, "I'll be back."

Griffeth was sponsored by Oklahoma National Stockyards Co., Stockman-Oklahoma Livestock, Inc., and Oklahoma Livestock Order Buyers, all of Oklahoma City and Apache Auction Market, Apache, Okla.

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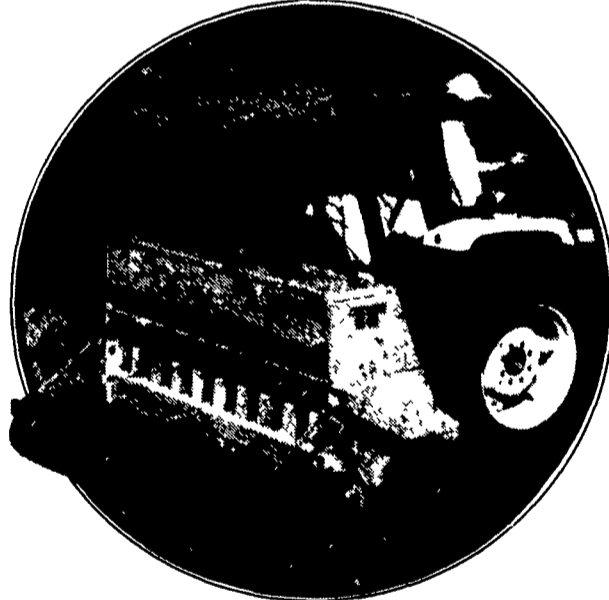
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