



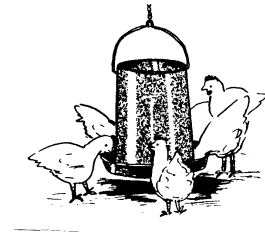
The University of Georgia

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BACKYARD FLOCK TIP . . .



Northern fowl mites are blood sucking external parasites that congregate around the tail and vent region of birds. Mites are small, about the size and color of coarse ground pepper if they have had a blood meal. Prior to eating, mites are somewhat colorless. With light or white-feathered birds, it is fairly easy to see the mites and the eggs they lay clinging to the vent feathers, but in dark feathered birds fowl mites are more difficult to detect. To determine if a bird has fowl mites, restrain the bird; separate the feathers at the vent looking for black speckles moving on the skin or the mite eggs on the feather shaft close to the skin.

Fowl mites are parasitic to domestic poultry and a variety of wild birds. The routes of transfer include: infested to non-infested birds (when new birds are introduced to the flock or at shows), people and materials that move from infested birds to non-infested birds, and rodents moving from infested birds to non-infested birds.

What will a mite infestation do to the birds? Mites remove blood from the bird and thereby steal nutrients that the bird could use for egg production or weight gain. It is not uncommon in moderate to heavy infestations to see egg production noticeably decline. In feed restricted broiler breeders, egg production averages 7-8 eggs lower per hen housed when birds are mite infested (Arends *et al.*, 1984). An increase in feed per dozen eggs between infested and non-infested broiler breeders was reported to be 0.11 to 0.68 pounds. Birds will often lose weight as the conversion of feed to body weight is reduced. With breeding populations, fertility will be lower and erratic due to scabbed areas in the vent region leading to reluctance to mate.

Treatment - There are three classes of chemicals that can be used to treat birds with fowl mites: carbaryl (Sevin), cythion (Malathion), and permethrin (Insectrin). Fowl mites build up a resistance to these miticides if the chemical is used over a long period of time. If you routinely have fowl mites, rotate treatment chemicals yearly. It is important to know which of these chemicals will be most effective on the current infestation. To determine effectiveness, pull feathers that have mite eggs and

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place them in a glass jar. After the eggs hatch, treat with one of the above approved miticides and treat with the chemical that gives you the best kill.

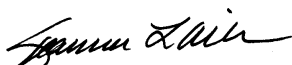
Birds can be dipped in the chemical or the litter and nest can be treated with dry chemicals. To combat heavy infestations, both types of treatment will likely be required. In breeding flocks, the roosters will need to be dipped. Roosters do not typically dust bathe so treating the litter or the nest will not be an effective means of treatment.

Mixing chemical dips - Always mix the chemical to the manufacturer's instructions. Once the chemical and water are at the correct concentration add one tablespoon of liquid detergent per gallon of mix. This will allow the chemical to cling and penetrate through the feathers. If this step is omitted, the liquid dip will be shed from the feathers before having any chance to kill the live mites. Another note is that all available chemicals for fowl mite treatment kill the adult and have no effect on the eggs. Fowl mite eggs hatch within 7-10 days. For this reason it is important to retreat the birds at the shortest time interval permitted by the product label, to kill any mites that may have hatched since the previous treatment. Similarly, if the floors were treated with dry chemicals recharged the area at the frequency recommended on the label.

House treatment – When no birds are present, the house can be treated with cyfluthrin (Tempo) to reduce the chance that the next birds housed in the building will acquire fowl mites. Another important step in mite control is controlling rodent access to the buildings. Rodents can carry fowl mites from one building to another so a good rodent control program is essential in reducing the spread of fowl mites.

Hope this summary on northern fowl mites will help you control this important pest on your backyard flock.

Sincerely,



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