

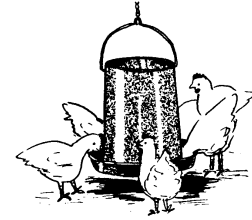


The University of Georgia

Cooperative Extension Service

College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences / Athens, Georgia 30602-4356

MAY 2010



BACKYARD FLOCK TIP . . .

CONTROLLING POULTRY LICE AND MITES

Ectoparasites (e.g. lice & mites) are often a problem for small flock producers. These insects are extremely small (about the size of a pin head) and difficult to detect unless one knows how and where to look for these pests. Even though they are very small and not easily noticed, they can cause problems for caretakers as well as the birds themselves. Heavily infested flocks can suffer substantial economic losses as a result of reductions in egg production, reduced weight gains, lower hatchability, increased feed costs and increased mortality. Poultry workers may experience the uncomfortable conditions of numerous bites and skin rashes. The following is useful information for controlling these parasites in small flocks:

Northern Fowl Mite (white, gray, black or red in color)

- § Hosts include wild birds and rodents as well as poultry.
- § Infestations can occur at any time of the year.
- § Mites generally spend their entire life on or near the host.
- § Life cycle can be complete in as little as 5 days.

Chicken Mites (white, gray, black or red in color)

- § Hosts include wild birds (pigeons are a popular host) as well as poultry.
- § Hide off hosts during the day in nest boxes, cracks and crevices. Feed on hosts at night.
- § Life cycle can be complete in as little as 7 days.
- § Workers may experience bites, itching or rashes.

Chicken Body Louse (yellowish color, flat body)

- § Spends its entire life on the chicken. No other hosts.
- § Chewing lice that feed on skin and feathers.
- § Life cycle is complete in 18 to 21 days.
- § Generally found around the vent area.

PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State College, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating.
The Cooperative Extension service officers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability
An equal opportunity/affirmative action organization committed to a diverse work force..

Management

It is not difficult to monitor birds in a small flock on a regular basis. Birds and nests should be checked at least monthly for signs of lice or mites. More frequent monitoring may be needed if the problem is severe.

- § Check birds at the base of the feathers and around the vent area for adult lice and mites or for evidence of eggs. Eggs may appear as dirty gray areas at the base of the feathers, particularly around the vent.
- § Look for evidence of lesions or skin irritation anywhere on the body of the bird,
- § Examine nest boxes for evidence of mites. Mites may be seen as rapidly moving specks on the nesting material or the hands. A flash light may be helpful in looking for these pests.
- § Be alert for unexplained rashes, itching or other skin disorders on workers.

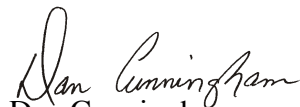
Treatment

The most common treatment for poultry lice and mites for small flock owners is the use of a dust powder or spray solution. Permethrin and tetrachlorvinphos are insecticides commonly used for treating poultry with ectoparasites. These insecticides can be found in dust or spray applications in most farm animal supply stores and can be applied directly to the birds or to treat nests. Permethrin strips that can be hung in the pens are also available for lice and mite control. Regardless of which insecticide is used, it is important to follow label instructions.

Bird Application. To ensure proper treatment, it is important that all birds be treated. The insecticide must be applied so that it penetrates to the skin. Thorough application of the insecticide to the base of the feathers of all birds will be required. In addition, a follow up application will be necessary to kill newly hatched larvae. Eggs of ectoparasites are unaffected by these insecticides.

Application to Premises. When applying insecticides for ectoparasites, the material should be applied to areas where these pests hide. Thus, nest boxes, side and end walls, cages and other stationary equipment should be treated. As with direct application to the birds, a second application to kill parasites that may have hatched following treatment will be necessary. *Individuals should always follow label instruction on interval usage and application rates for pesticides.* All pesticides are most effective when applied to clean facilities.

Controlling ectoparasites in poultry flocks will result in healthier and more economically productive birds for the pleasure and benefit of your family.


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