Control External Poultry Parasites

Gale B. Mast

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Control External Poultry Parasites

Lice, mites, bedbugs, and fleas are the most destructive external parasites of poultry in South Dakota. These pests can retard growth, lower vitality, reduce egg production, and even kill the fowl. Heavy infestations can reduce egg production as much as 20% and will cause the birds to lose weight.

A frequent check for these external parasites takes little time and can save flock owners money. While collecting eggs, you can check some birds from the nest for lice without disturbing the remainder of the flock. Also frequently check the roost areas and cracks and crevices in the building for mites.

The general appearance of birds may indicate infestations. Lousy birds have scaly, scabby skin and ragged feathers. Droopiness, paleness, and excessive preening are often indications of lice and mites.

POULTRY LICE

There are several species of lice which attack poultry: the body louse, head louse, shaft louse, fluff louse, and others. All have chewing mouthparts and spend their entire life on the birds. Lice-infested poultry become restless and eat poorly, causing the birds to lose weight and have poor, ragged plumage.

By Gale B. Mast, Extension Entomologist

Identity of parasites at top of page, left to right: body louse, head louse, shaft louse, chicken mite—all greatly enlarged.

Young chicks may die from heavy lice infestations.

When the feathers are parted on a heavily infested bird, the lice can be seen moving around the bases of the feathers looking for cover. Part the feathers on several areas of the body, giving special attention to the fluff areas below the vent and below the wing. On heavily infested birds there may be gray clumps of louse eggs attached to the feathers under the vent.

MITES

Several different mites are commonly found on poultry: the chicken or roost mite, northern fowl mite, scaly-leg mite, depluming mite, and chiggers. The habits of these species vary greatly, causing the control method to be varied for each species.

Chicken or roost mites. Chicken mites attach themselves to poultry during the night and suck blood. During the day they hide in cracks and crevices of the poultry house. If you examine these cracks you may find masses of mites, their eggs, and the silvery skins cast by the immature mites.

Fowl in heavily infested houses have pale combs and wattles. They become droopy and weak and are more susceptible to other parasites and to diseases.

Northern fowl mites. This mite spends its entire life on the bird and therefore requires a different method of treatment. These mites are common on chickens and are occasionally found on turkeys. Infested birds have soiled feathers and scab spots about the vent, back, and neck.

The northern fowl mites have piercing, sucking
mouthparts and feed by sucking blood from the fowl.

Scaly-leg mites. Scaly-leg mites burrow under the scales of the fowl's feet and lower legs. The burrowing causes itching and irritation. If untreated, the legs and feet become distorted and some of the terminal joints of the feet may be lost.

BEDBUGS

Bedbugs will sometimes infest the poultry house. They will feed on the poultry at night and seek shelter in cracks and crevices during the day. They can be carried into the home in egg baskets and other equipment or on the clothing. Make frequent checks behind nest boxes and in and around the cracks in the housing.

INSECTICIDES ARE POISONS AND MUST BE HANDLED WITH CARE

Before you spray or dust, remove or cover all feed, feeders, waterers, or other items that may become contaminated with the poisonous spray.

See that the building in which you spray is well ventilated.

Do not breathe mist from the sprays or the dusts.

Keep insecticides off your skin. Wash skin thoroughly after spraying and launder clothes before reuse.

Store insecticides in a safe place where children or pets and other animals cannot get to them.

### CHEMICAL CONTROL OF POULTRY PESTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insect</th>
<th>Chemical</th>
<th>Formulation</th>
<th>Dosage</th>
<th>Restrictions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poultry Lice</td>
<td>Co-Ral</td>
<td>Wetable powder</td>
<td>0.1 to 0.2%</td>
<td>Thorough coverage of the litter and housing. Do not repeat application more often than weekly. Apply to litter at the rate of 6.6 oz. per 100 sq. ft. and to all interior surfaces at the rate of 2 oz. per 100 sq. ft. Co-Ral may be applied directly to birds as a 0.1% spray or 0.5 to 5.0% dust. Dust box self-treatment may be used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dust</td>
<td>0.5 to 5.0%</td>
<td>Apply as surface spray to all surfaces or with a paint brush as a roost paint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malathion</td>
<td>Emulsifiable concentrate</td>
<td>2.0 to 4.0%</td>
<td>Apply as surface spray to all surfaces or as a roost paint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken or Roost Mites</td>
<td>Co-Ral</td>
<td>Wetable powder</td>
<td>0.1 to 0.2%</td>
<td>Thorough coverage of the litter and housing. Do not repeat application more often than weekly. Apply to litter at the rate of 6.6 oz. per 100 sq. ft. and to all interior surfaces at the rate of 2 oz. per 100 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dust</td>
<td>0.5 to 5.0%</td>
<td>Apply as surface spray to all surfaces or as a roost paint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Fowl Mites</td>
<td>Malathion</td>
<td>Emulsifiable concentrate</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>Spray lightly over the backs of all birds. One gallon of mix will treat 100-125 birds; a second application may be needed in 10-14 days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dust</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>Thorough, even application directly to birds or place in a free-choice dusting box.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-Ral</td>
<td>Wetable powder</td>
<td>0.1 to 0.2%</td>
<td>Thorough, even coverage of birds and housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dust</td>
<td>0.5 to 5.0%</td>
<td>Thorough coverage or dust box self-treatment. Do not repeat Co-Ral application more often than weekly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaly-leg Mites</td>
<td>Co-Ral</td>
<td>Wetable powder</td>
<td>0.1 to 0.2%</td>
<td>Dip the feet and lower legs of the birds. Be careful not to get oils on feathers or skin on upper legs. If the infestation persists, repeat the treatment of oil about 4 weeks later or one of the insecticide solutions 14 days later.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Emulsifiable concentrate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malathion</td>
<td>Emulsifiable concentrate</td>
<td>3 tbs. 57%</td>
<td>Thorough application to house, making sure all cracks and crevices are sprayed. Do not spray birds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do not spray birds.