

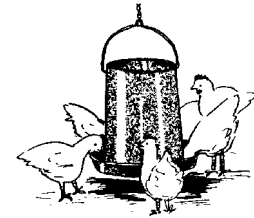


The University of Georgia

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BACKYARD FLOCK TIP...

TIS THE SEASON FOR COLD AND FLU

This time of year brings with it the sounds of sneezing, wheezing and chattering of beaks as poultry experience cold weather ailments. Bronchitis, laryngotracheitis, and even occasionally the dreaded influenza will crop up in flocks. Owners need to be mindful of flock health during this season and endeavor to take needed steps to prevent disease before it occurs. Unfortunately, many of the respiratory diseases of poultry have similar clinical signs. Sneezing, gurgling, coughing, labored breathing, nasal discharge, swollen eyes and head all are symptoms that can be associated with respiratory disease. Laboratory analysis is often needed to differentiate one disease from another. Of the respiratory diseases that can strike poultry, the three of most concern this time of year are LT, IB and AI.

- 1) Laryngotracheitis (LT) is an acute, highly contagious disease of chickens. Classic signs include labored breathing with extended neck, coughing, sneezing and vigorous shaking of the head. Mortality is often high with this infection.
- 2) Infectious Bronchitis (IB) is a highly contagious, rapid spreading disease. Symptoms may include eye and nasal discharge, coughing, and sneezing. Mortality can be high in young birds.
- 3) Avian Influenza (AI), while not common, has the potential to inflict serious damage in any flock. Symptoms can range from minor respiratory infection to 100% mortality depending on the strain of virus. Signs include coughing, sneezing, tearing, huddling, ruffled feathers, and swelling of the head and face. Proper quarantine or depopulation of AI positive flocks is essential in preventing the spread of this potentially devastating disease.

An Ounce of Prevention:

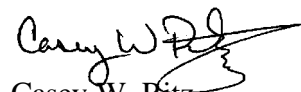
Everyone has heard the phrase: an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. This holds true from the smallest backyard flock to the largest commercial complex. Minimizing disease in small flocks is important since they can act as reservoirs of disease transmissible to commercial flocks.

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
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- 1) The first step in prevention is knowing the enemy. In the case of colds and flu, viruses are the culprit. Viruses can infiltrate a flock by air, wild birds, insect and rodent pests, new additions to the flock, and human traffic. Antibiotic treatments will not rid your birds of these organisms. With viral disease, there is no effective treatment once a flock has developed the disease. Prevention of viral disease is through effective husbandry and in some cases by vaccination. Thorough sanitation and disinfection can reduce the incidence of viral infection.
- 2) Early recognition of disease can reduce the spread of infection. Look for changes in eating, drinking, and behavioral habits and for signs and sounds of respiratory distress.
- 3) Purchase stock from reputable dealers, preferably those that participate with the National Poultry Improvement Plan. Quarantine new birds from existing flocks for at least 3 weeks. Watch for signs of disease and treat for internal and external parasites.
- 4) Separate your flock by age, keeping young birds away from breeding stock to give them time to develop their immune systems. Separate species where possible. Some species may not be affected by certain diseases yet may serve as carriers of disease to another species that is susceptible.
- 5) Vaccination programs for LT and IB are advisable for farms with a history of disease outbreak.
- 6) Be mindful of animals, objects, and people that enter your premises. Respiratory discharge, feces and bird-to-bird contact are the main modes of viral transmission.
- 7) Minimize free ranging of the flock by maintaining some form of confinement to lessen the chance for exposure.
- 8) Maintain good ventilation while providing needed warmth. Block drafts to minimize chilling and huddling. Cold-stressed birds are more susceptible to disease than birds kept in a stable temperature environment.
- 9) Provide appropriate nutrition. Nutrient requirements will increase during the winter months when birds have to compensate for low temperatures in their living quarters.
- 10) Implement wild bird and pest control measures. Wild birds, particularly waterfowl, can serve as reservoirs of respiratory disease.
- 11) When birds die from disease or unknown causes, rapid disposal of carcasses is important to prevent disease transfer. Mortality should be removed promptly to prevent scavenging by the remaining birds. Bury, burn or compost your mortality away from the rest of the flock.

Maintaining a healthy flock brings economic benefits and results in a more pleasurable activity for the owner.



Casey W. Ritz
Extension Poultry Scientist

****Consult with your poultry company representative before making management changes.****

“Your local County Extension Agent is a source of more information on this subject.”