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FOWL POX AND ITS CONTROL

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Fowl-pox (chicken-pox) is an infectious disease of both chickens and turkeys. It is due to an infective agent known as a virus.

In laying chickens it causes a decided loss in egg production and usually occurs when egg prices are highest. In turkeys, if it occurs near marketing time, may cause loss in flesh and postpone sale because of the unsightly condition of the head. Considerable loss by death sometimes occurs, principally in the case of chickens.

Lesions

The disease causes blisters, wart-like growths and scabs to form, particularly on the face, comb, eyelids and wattles. Canker or cheese-like material may form in the mouth and windpipe. Since canker develops from other causes, one should not rely upon this alone to diagnose the disease, but should be guided by the lesions on the face, comb, and wattles. Deaths from fowl-pox are commonly due to suffocation caused by the canker in the windpipe.

Frequently lesions form on the edges of the eyelids causing them to close. If these are severe, blindness results. This form of the disease may be mistaken for roup.

About a week after the infection is introduced into the skin, the blister-like lesion, characteristic of fowl-pox, appears. For chickens, a month or more is required before the scabs fall off and healing is complete. For turkeys, about six weeks is required.

If affected fowls are separated and closely observed throughout the course of the disease, the progressive development of the lesions can be noted. It is particularly important for those inexperienced in its detection to make such observation. Early detection will save considerable loss.

Management and Treatment of Affected Fowls

If the disease is detected when a small per cent of the flock is affected, those fowls should be removed from the flock immediately. This lessens the spread and reduces the severity.

Pox does not develop in normal skin or lining of the mouth; there must be a break or injury through which the virus may enter. Use of feed hoppers and other equipment where heads and necks of fowls may be injured or virus rubbed

into breaks in the skin, should be avoided. Feeding sharp objects such as glass or some types of grit should be avoided during an outbreak.

Males are particularly likely to spread the infection by fighting, turkeys especially. Segregating the males is important where practicable to do so.

No treatment is highly effective but undiluted tincture of iodine applied to affected parts every two or three days assists recovery.

Vaccination

Vaccination is a highly efficient method of preventing the disease in both turkeys and chickens. This applies to fowl-pox specifically and not to roup which is an entirely different disease. It should also be clearly understood that vaccination with fowl-pox virus is the product here recommended and not those known as Bacterins.

Vaccination is not a cure. To be effective, vaccination must be applied as a preventive. It should not be applied on all farms but confined to those where the disease existed the previous year; where vaccination was applied the previous year; where the disease exists at the time or where it may be introduced by adjacent affected flocks or those being vaccinated. The virus used for vaccination contains the living cause of fowl-pox so the product must be handled accordingly.

Method of Vaccination. The stick method originated at the Oregon Experiment Station is superior to any yet devised. Special equipment, which will last indefinitely if cared for properly, is necessary for applying this method, and may be purchased for \$1. It should not be assumed that virus from other sources will prove equally effective. This may be true if the distributor recommends the stick method.

Age at Which to Vaccinate and Effect upon Laying Stock. Turkeys and chickens may be vaccinated satisfactorily from the day-old stage to within a month of coming into production. Between one and two months of age seems to be the most satisfactory period.

Laying flocks should not be vaccinated unless affected with pox or in immediate danger of becoming so. If the disease is detected early, such flocks should be vaccinated because the losses are less and recovery more rapid than when natural infection runs its course. Occasionally laying flocks may be vaccinated without affecting egg production, or only slightly so, but it cannot be done with any regularity. Fowls in a molt are very good subjects for vaccination.

If growing stock on a given farm is of several ages, it may be advisable to vaccinate the older ones at one time and the remainder later. This is particularly so when there is considerable difference in the ages. There is no objection to following this practice if the vaccinated fowls are kept entirely separate and if vaccinated during the summer.

Immunity. Three to four weeks are required, from the time a fowl is vaccinated, to become immune.

One vaccination is apparently sufficient to protect against natural infection for the average life of the fowl. The present principle of vaccination has

been applied by the Oregon Experiment Station for six years and no reports have been received where immunized fowls ever developed pox.

Pigeon Virus. This type of virus has been widely recommended by others during the past two years, due to the fact that it does not seem to affect egg production. It offers possibilities but there is need for further investigation before it can be unqualifiedly recommended as is fowl-pox virus.

Additional Information

Further information pertaining to vaccination procedure, cost of virus and equipment may be had upon request.