

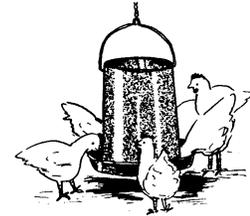


The University of Georgia

Cooperative Extension Service

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

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BACKYARD FLOCK TIP . . .

HOW WILL I KNOW THAT MY BIRDS ARE SICK?

Backyard flocks are kept for different reasons, some keep them for fresh eggs daily, some will occasionally kill a bird for dinner, some folks grow backyard flocks for exhibition, while others grow birds to sell eggs and meat to their neighbors. Finally some people grow birds just for the pleasure of having them in their yards. Regardless of the reason for growing birds, one should be aware that there is always a chance that birds will become sick or may even die. One important factor in raising chickens is that you should be able to identify the signs of illness in the flock. Rapid identification of disease conditions will help reduce or prevent spread of disease and mortality in your flock.

Signs of Trouble:

Sudden increase in bird death- a sudden rise in the number of dead birds you pick up each day is strong indication that something is wrong.

1. General symptoms such as reductions in food and water consumption indicate that birds may be ill. If a bird appears to be listless, appears depressed or is reluctant to move, it might be ill. Birds with ruffled feather could also be ill. If birds within the flock display any of these symptoms they should be quarantined and observed.



Listlessness/reluctance to move

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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2. Sneezing, coughing, and nasal discharge. These symptoms are usually signs of a respiratory infection. Respiratory infections are usually contagious diseases which can spread quickly through the flock.



Nasal discharge

3. Watery and green or bloody diarrhea is an indication of a gastrointestinal disorder. Birds can be seen drinking large amounts of water and regurgitation of food and water. At times birds may pass bloody or mucoid diarrhea.
4. Reduction in egg production, soft or misshapen eggs, impaired hatchability, infertility and early chick mortality are all indicators of ill health. Some of these symptoms could be related to nutrition or the age of the bird.



Misshapen eggs

5. Abnormal observation on the skin such as vesicles or postules, sloughing of skin, swollen joints or foot pads, pale wattles and comb, purple wattles and combs and swelling around eyes, neck and head are all indicators of ill-health.



Swelling around eyes

6. Chicks huddling near to the heat source or excessive peeping can indicate illness in the flock.
7. Neurological indicators would include but are not limited to; twisting of the head and neck, falling to one side or the other, unable to stand, paralysis (complete, partial or transient).



Neurological disorder

If you observe any of the symptoms that have been listed above you should contact your county extension office. Extension agents will not diagnose the symptoms but they will direct you to your states' veterinary labs where the vets will facilitate you. In the state of Georgia the Georgia Poultry Lab Network (GPLN) provide health monitoring and veterinary diagnostic services for poultry producers and other bird owners in the state. Below are the contact numbers for the labs in the state;

Oakwood- 770-535-5996

Camilla- 229-336-0001

Carnesville- 706-384-2387

Dalton- 706-278-7306

Forsyth- 478-994-1219

Glennville- 912-654-0504

Remember, the sooner the problem is diagnosed, the better the chances are at stopping spread throughout the flock.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claudia Dunkley', written over a horizontal line.

Claudia Dunkley
Extension Poultry Scientist

Extension County Coordinator/Agent

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