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## EC1466 Revised 1947 Coccidiosis

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Nebraska  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK  
IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

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1466 Rev. -47

U. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating  
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

COCCIDIOSIS  
by S. W. Alford  
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Coccidiosis is a disease that may affect both young and growing birds. Older birds seem to develop a partial resistance to the disease. Therefore, it is most often seen as a serious outbreak in young chickens 3 to 10 weeks of age.

The disease is caused by parasites called "coccidia." Oocysts or eggs of the parasite are taken in with feed and water. They attack the wall of the intestine, grow and multiply rapidly and cause damage and inflammation. After 4 to 8 days of development in the wall of the intestine many oocysts escape with the droppings. These must develop outside the chickens for at least two days (depending upon temperature and moisture conditions) before they can cause disease in other chickens. However, another form of the parasite, before it reaches the oocyst or egg stage, may be eliminated in the droppings in great numbers and be immediately infective to other birds. This form is important in the control of extremely acute outbreaks of the disease.

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It is spread primarily by droppings of infected birds but may be carried to chickens by caretakers, wild birds, other animals, flies, equipment and feed. Coccidia of other birds and animals do not cause disease in chickens, neither do the chicken species affect other animals. Different types of coccidia attack different portions of the intestine. The disease most often seen affects the ceca (blind pouches), which are often filled with blood. Paleness of head and legs, loss of appetite, bloody droppings and droopiness are symptoms that may be observed. Death losses are not great in older birds. They may be unthrifty, inactive, show loss of appetite and a diarrhea.

Early diagnosis is important to avoid losses in severe infections. Laboratory examination of affected chickens will identify this disease.

Coccidia are present in nearly all poultry flocks. It is important to keep the infection at a low level where it produces little or no harm. Over crowding and insanitary conditions are usually responsible for outbreaks of the disease.

Sanitation and management are the two most effective weapons one can use against coccidiosis. The use of these weapons is a responsibility of the flock owner.

The following sanitary measures are recommended for the prevention of coccidiosis:

1. Thoroughly clean and disinfect brooder houses and equipment before use
2. Keep each brood of chicks separated and away from other birds.
3. Allow one square foot of floor space per two chicks for the first six weeks.
4. Cover floors with fresh, clean, dry litter.
5. Keep litter dry at all times.
6. Feeding and drinking equipment should be maintained so that the litter is kept dry and feed and water kept free from droppings. Screen-covered platforms for feeders and waterers as illustrated in Extension Poultry Circular 1481 are recommended.



7. If "built-up litter" method is used, the litter should be stirred three times weekly and new litter added each week.
8. If possible, separate caretakers should attend to old and young stock. Otherwise separate rubbers should be worn while caring for the two groups of birds.
9. Provide a continuous supply of clean water in clean utensils. Utensils should be thoroughly cleaned every day. The use of a stiff bristle brush is recommended. This practice is very much preferred to the use of drinking water disinfectants.
10. When moving the birds to range, select well drained ground not used by poultry the previous year. This practice is fundamental in control of worms, coccidiosis, blackhead, and other diseases.
11. Burn or bury deeply all dead birds immediately.
12. Dispose of manure and soiled litter as soon as collected. Spread it on fields that will not be used by poultry for at least two years.

The above sanitary measures for prevention of coccidiosis should also be applied in a flock where the disease becomes a problem.

Birds with coccidiosis may be given a mixture of milk with their mash feed. Skim milk or buttermilk may be substituted for the water. If liquid skim milk or buttermilk is not available a mash mixture can be fed that contains 10 percent dried milk, buttermilk, or whey. Such a milk ration can be fed for one to three days depending upon the degree of infection, after which a mash mixture containing 4 percent dried milk product would be continued for one to two weeks.

In recent years certain drug preparations have been recommended for the control and prevention of coccidiosis. Some of these, such as sulphur and sulfaguanidine, have shown promise in the prevention of the disease. They have no effect in the treatment of the chickens which are already sick with the disease. Their use as a preventive must be limited to a short period of time because of expense and toxic effects. At present they must be regarded as having a usefulness limited to certain circumstances. They are not a substitute for sanitation.

