

Hen Health - Worms

Worms, worms, worms... Internal parasites can severely reduce the number of eggs laid, or stop your hen laying all together! They stop younger hens gaining any weight or with adult hens they cause loss of weight. Other symptoms include lethargy, loss of feathers, loss of colour in comb etc. Also leading to death in the most severe cases.

Many people do not think about worms in poultry, but as with all animals, worms can occur and you cannot tell that they have them simply by looking at the hen. With hens kept free range outdoors, combined with the milder winters which are not killing off the worm eggs on the ground, this is becoming more and more of a problem that we all need to keep on top of and so we recommend regular worming to keep your flock clear.

Worms come to your ground through the poo of other wild birds who drop in to visit. Your hens will eat grass and ingest worm eggs, or may eat earth worms who have eaten the worm eggs. The worms grow inside the hen, then the hen passes worms or worm eggs in their poo, and the cycle starts again. If untreated, the intestines of a hen become packed with worms. These eat the food that the hen has eaten, so the hen eats more and more food but still loses weight and can't lay eggs because they aren't absorbing enough nutrients.

Sunlight (UV) kills the worm eggs when they are on the ground. This is why, if you can, it is better to rotate the hens onto different ground every few months so that the number of worms on that ground doesn't get bigger and bigger. You can also cleanse the ground by sprinkling lime. This kills the worms and it is best to leave the hens off of treated ground for a month if possible.

Try not to feed your hens off of the ground. A large plastic tray or something similar is better to put treats on.

Stomach/Gut Worms

There are many different types of parasite/worm which live in hens, such as;

- Ascarids or *Ascaridia galli*
- Cecal Worms or *Heterakis gallinae*
- Capillaria or *Capillaria annulata* / *Capillaria contorta*
- Tapeworms or cestodes

Gape Worm also known as Lung Worm

These live in the chicken's respiratory system (lungs) and can be quickly fatal because the hens suffocate. They can be picked up by your hens from eating slugs, snails and earth worms when free ranging, and from the faeces of infected wild birds. Birds infected with these can be seen gaping with their mouths open and have respiratory distress symptoms (they look a bit shocked).

Treatment

We recommend treating your chickens for worms every 3-4 months as standard routine. If you have a severe worm infestation (for example you can actually see tiny worms in the hen's poo, then treat them all again after 6 weeks.

Note: If you keep chickens and turkeys on the same ground, then worming every 8 weeks is needed for the turkeys (to avoid blackhead).

In terms of worming products, there are a number available for use in treatment and these can all be bought without a prescription:

Flubenvet

Give for 7 days. Add this to the layers pellets at the following rate; 24 grams mixed into 20 kilograms, or 12 grams mixed into 10 kilograms, or 6 grams mixed into 5 kilograms. Mix it in a bucket, a little vegetable oil added helps the powder stick to the pellets. If you have just 2 or 3 hens then you can cut a grape in half and add a 'pinch' inside it, giving one per hen for 7 days.

Piperazine Tartrate

This is added to drinking water for 24 hours, but does not treat all types of worms.

Solubanol

This is added to drinking water for 7 days, but you need to whisk it into the water and mix fresh amount daily.

Diatomaceous Earth**

Mix 500 grams to a 20 KG bag of feed to prevent and treat worms. This practice is also said to result in lower fly populations in the resulting manure. Good as a preventative measure, but not effective to treat heavy infestation.

Lime Pellets**

For treating ground that hens have free ranged on. Sprinkle liberally by hand and allow ground to rest for 2-3 weeks. Rain will break pellets down.

Remember, when giving these treatments, where the treatment is given in the drinking water then make sure your hens do not have access to any other water (puddles, ponds etc). When given in food, then do not give any other food such as treats etc to make sure they take in enough medication (this doesn't apply with the grape method!).

** *We usually have all these for sale, please enquire...*