Common Signs of Illness in Poultry

Signs of Respiratory Infection

A disease-causing organism can affect more than one system, leading to a variety of different clinical signs. There is considerable overlap in the common signs of respiratory diseases, making diagnosis difficult without a necropsy.

**Common signs of respiratory infection** include the following:

- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Rales (abnormal breathing sounds)
- Gasping
- Shaking head
- Discharge from the eyes
- Conjunctivitis (inflammation of the conjunctiva of the eye)
- Discharge from the nose
- Swelling of the face and/or wattles
- Bluish-purple discoloration of the face
- Retarded growth
- Inactivity
- Dirty wings (birds tend to wipe their nostrils on their wings)

**Less common signs** of respiratory infection include the following:

- Twisting of the head and neck (torticollis)
- Paralysis
- Diarrhea, which might be green and watery
- Swollen joints
- Lameness
- Red or white spots on the legs and comb
- Warts or scabs

Signs of Nonrespiratory Infection

**Common signs of nonrespiratory** infection include the following:

- Labored breathing
- Reduced water consumption
- Dehydration
- Reduced feed consumption
- Weight loss or stunted growth
- Emaciation
- Bluish-purple discoloration of the face
• Pale comb
• Small comb
• Abscessed wattles
• Discharge from the mouth
• Blindness
• Enlarged abdomen
• Navel infection
• Swollen joints
• Swollen foot pads
• Lameness
• Tremors
• Paralysis
• Twisting of the head and neck (torticollis)
• Weakness
• Diarrhea, which might be greenish
• White feces
• Bloody feces
• Pasted vent
• Watery droppings
• Thin-shelled eggs
• Shell-less eggs
• Reduced egg production
• Increased mortality
• Helicopter wings (that is, broken or twisted feathers)
• Ruffled feathers
• Foul odor
• Inactivity

NOTE It is not unusual for poultry to die suddenly without showing any signs of disease.