

Fowl Cholera in Poultry

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Fowl cholera is a bacterial infection caused by *Pasteurella multocida*. This infection is also referred to as avian pasteurellosis and avian hemorrhagic septicemia. All poultry species, including gamebirds and waterfowl, are susceptible to this type of bacteria. Domestic birds, including pets or birds at the zoo, and wild birds can be infected. Fowl cholera usually strikes birds older than six weeks of age.

Infected birds are a major source of infection, spreading bacteria through secretions from the mouth, nose, and eyes that contaminate feed and water. This type of bacteria is not typically shed in fecal material. Wild birds, cats, and rodents can be carriers.

Clinical Signs

Early in the infection, chicks might exhibit typical signs of sickness—reduced feed consumption, lethargy, and so on—as well as darkened heads (purplish discoloration of wattles and combs). Late in the infection, birds might exhibit swollen heads, wattles, foot pads, and joints.

Treatment

Because fowl cholera is caused by a bacterium, it can be treated with antibiotics.

Prevention and Control

Thorough sanitation, rodent control, and a rigorous biosecurity plan are essential to preventing infection. Vaccines are available to aid in the control of an outbreak within a flock. However, vaccination is not recommended unless fowl cholera is already present and problematic on a farm.

For More Information

Fowl cholera. Michigan Department of Natural Resources.