

# Staphylococcus in Poultry

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Infection caused by the bacteria *Staphylococcus* is referred to by several names: **staphylococcus**, staph infection, staph septicemia, staph arthritis, bumblefoot, and plantar pododermatitis. All fowl, especially turkeys, chickens, gamebirds and waterfowl, are susceptible to this infection. Staphylococcus is found in the soil, and outbreaks often occur after storms when birds on range drink from stagnant rain pools.

## Clinical Signs

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Staphylococcal infections appear in three forms: septicemia, arthritis, and bumblefoot.

- **Staph septicemia** appears to be similar to fowl cholera in that affected birds are listless, have little appetite, and show pain during movement. Infected birds typically have foul-smelling, watery diarrhea. Many infected birds get swollen joints and/or experience a drop in egg production. Because the bacteria is passed into the egg from infected hens, black rot might appear in eggs.
- **Staph arthritis** follows the acute septicemia. Birds become lame and develop breast blisters. Infected birds are reluctant to walk, preferring to sit rather than stand.
- **Bumblefoot** is a localized staphylococcus infection of the foot. It is thought to be caused by puncture injuries. Affected birds become lame from swollen foot pads.

## Treatment

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Staphylococcus infection can be treated with antibiotics.

## Prevention and Control

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Remove objects that could injure birds from shelters and areas where the birds range. Isolate chronically affected birds.

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### Resources:

Bumblefoot. Tina Savage, University of New Hampshire, and Michael Darre, University of Connecticut.