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"MUSHY" CHICK OR POULT DISEASE

By

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"Mushy" chick or poult disease is a term used to describe chicks and poults that fail to eliminate water so that fluid accumulates in the tissues. These birds often appear to be the largest in the brood. They are apparently healthy until just before they die. When the skin is opened there is often a jelly-like material just under the skin and when the abdomen is opened free fluid flows out. Another name for this disease is "water belly". The accumulation of fluid in tissue is an "edema" and an excess of fluid in the abdomen is called "ascites". Ascites can be produced by any chemical or disease that will prevent the normal function of the kidney. We find ascites as a frequent symptom of navel infections in chicks and poults, but in many cases of ascites there is no evidence of an infection.

Avoid Salt or Salty Waters

Trials by numerous research workers have shown that a high salt content of the ration is often the cause of ascites in poults and chicks. The "salt" may be the common salt, sodium chloride, or any one of the series of other "salts". The "salt" causing the damage may either be in the mash or the water.

Use Rain or Snow Water

Several poultry producers have repeatedly submitted chicks and poults with ascites. Some of them changed their water supplies by discontinuing the use of well water for small chicks and poults and used either rain water or melted snow. In all cases where we received reports the owners stated that when soft water was used there was a decrease in losses due to ascites.

Present evidence indicates that where ascites in chicks and poults is common a cistern should be built so that rain water or snow water may be used for the first four weeks of brooding. If it is impossible to provide soft water a special mash should be used. This mash should contain no salt (sodium chloride) and a minimum of bonemeal or limestone. Extra quantities of vitamin D must be included in the ration in order that the birds will be able to use all of the calcium and phosphorus available.

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