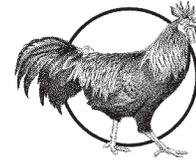




Bumblefoot



Bumblefoot, also known as plantar pododermatitis, is a common disorder of maturing males of the heavy breeds. Bumblefoot is characterized by lameness, swelling, heat, reluctance to walk, and a hard, pus-filled abscess on the pad of the foot covered by a black scab.

Bumblefoot results from injury or abrasion to the lower surface of the foot, which allows for the introduction of staphylococcus bacteria. Lesions can occur on toes, hocks and the pads of the feet. Bumblefoot is a chronic disease that if left untreated can result in a 50 percent mortality rate.

Staphylococcus bacteria are present wherever there are chickens. Infection occurs when a rough perch, splinter, wire floor, or a heavy bird's jump from a perch more than 18 inches off the floor causes a small break in the skin, allowing bacteria to enter. Improper litter management can also cause skin irritation and skin breaks that allow staph bacteria into the wound.

If Bumblefoot is detected while the lesion is soft and pliable, chances for successful treatment are higher than if treatment is delayed until the lesion becomes rock hard. Early Bumblefoot infections can be successfully treated with antibiotics, separating the affected bird from the flock and providing deep bedding to limit stress on the sore foot.

Administer the antibiotic according to label directions for the specified number of days. Staph bacteria can be transmitted to humans, so if you treat the bird, make sure to protect yourself by wearing gloves when handling the bird or the lesion. Wash hands, clothes and equipment after handling affected birds.

Draining the lesion promotes healing. Soak the foot in warm water and Epsom salts. When the scab has softened, remove it to expose the pus-filled cavity. Flush the cavity with hydrogen peroxide to clean out the pus and debris. Pack the cavity with antibiotic ointment, and then wrap the foot to keep the cavity clean.

Keep the treated bird separate from the rest of the flock on deep bedding, flush the cavity and re-wrap the foot at least every other day until completely healed. Pus and debris from the abscess are contagious to humans and other animals, so gather all contaminated materials for proper disposal by incineration or deep burial.

To prevent Bumblefoot, keep perches less than 18 inches off the floor. Repeated jumping from high perches by heavy birds can cause irritation and damage to the bottom of the foot and lead to Bumblefoot. Practice proper litter management; keep bedding clean, dry and deep in the coop to limit irritation to the foot. Check roosts, floors and other surfaces for rough and sharp edges. Puncture wounds and scrapes can become infected with staph bacteria and lead to abscesses.

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