

Common Continuous External Parasites of Poultry ¹

J.A. Hogsette, R.D. Jacobs, and J.P. Jacob²

Continuous external parasites spend *all* of their adult life on the host, in contrast to **temporary parasites** which *feed* on the host but don't live on the host.

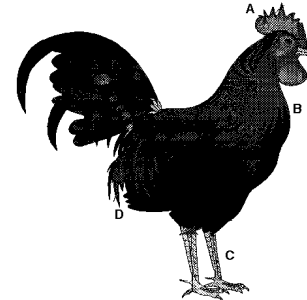
Sticktight Fleas

Species: *Echidnophaga gallinacea*

Life cycle: Larvae develop in soil and around chicken cages and pupate in about 2 weeks. Two weeks later, adult fleas emerge from pupae and are free-living until breeding occurs. Female fleas attach to skin around face and wattles and lay eggs to continue cycle.

Damaged caused: Ulceration and aggravation of skin, which if around eyes can lead to blindness.

Control: Sevin (Carbaryl; 5%) dust applied to fleas and litter. Adult fleas can be removed by hand; or they can be coated with petroleum jelly, which causes them to suffocate. If the petroleum jelly method is used, fleas will die within a short period of time, but they may remain attached to the chicken for an indefinite period (several days or weeks). Chicken raised in wire cages 3 feet or more above the ground do not usually become infested with sticktight fleas. See A in Figure 1 and Descriptions.



A in Figure 1.

Chicken Lice

Species: Chicken Body Louse (*Menacanthus stramineus*) and the Shaft Louse (*Menopon gallinae*)

Life cycle: Eggs hatch in 5-7 days. Cycle from egg to adult is about 3 weeks.

Damage caused: Louse feeding on blood and other fluids causes birds to become restless and irritated, thus affecting feed intake, digestion, growth and egg production. Young birds are more seriously affected. Lice tend to be more abundant in unclean overcrowded conditions.

Control: Malathion and Sevin dusts applied to birds. Pesticides used for northern fowl mites will

1. This document is PS10, one of a series of the Animal Science Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date October 1996. Reviewed June 2003. Visit the EDIS Web Site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. J.A. Hogsette, USDA-ARS, Gainesville; R.D. Jacobs, multi-county extension agent; and J.P. Jacob, poultry extension coordinator of Dairy and Poultry Sciences Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

usually control lice. See B in Figure 1 and Descriptions.

Scaly Leg Mite

Species: *Knemidokoptes mutans*

Life cycle: Probably 1-2 weeks.

Damage caused: Mites burrow into and live in the skin under the scales on the feet, causing the lifting of the scales and deformity of the feet. Inspect new birds before adding to flock. Transmission is from bird to bird.

Control: Control is difficult; prevention is better. Dip legs in mixture of 1 part kerosene and 2 parts raw linseed oil. Repeat at 7-day intervals for 3 weeks. Chickens raised in wire cages 3 feet or more above the ground do not usually become infested with scaly leg mites. See C in Figure 1 and Descriptions.

Northern Fowl Mite

Species: *Ornithonyssus sylviarum*

Life cycle: 5-7 days. Mites live entirely on the host and cannot survive more than a few days off of the host. Wild birds are reservoirs.

Damage caused: Itching and irritation from mite feeding. Large populations can cause anemia due to blood loss, and a reduction in egg production.

Control: Sevin, Malathion, Rabon, Ra-Vap, and Permethrin sprays. Check label for proper registration and use. For floor birds, put Sevin, Malathion, or Sulfur Dust in litter or dusting boxes. See D in Figure 1 and Descriptions.

Descriptions

A) Sticktight Fleas

Look for small brown insects that appear as dots clinging to or embedded in the fleshy parts of the chicken's head around the eyes.

B) Chicken Body Lice

Look for small, yellowish brown cigar-shaped insects on skin and in feathers on breast and under wings.

C) Scaly Leg Mites

Mites burrow under scales on lower legs and toes, causing scales to bulge out. Legs and toes become deformed.

D) Northern Fowl Mites

Look for dark patches in the feathers and on the skin around the vent area. Mites appear as tiny, fast-moving white or dark specks in these areas.