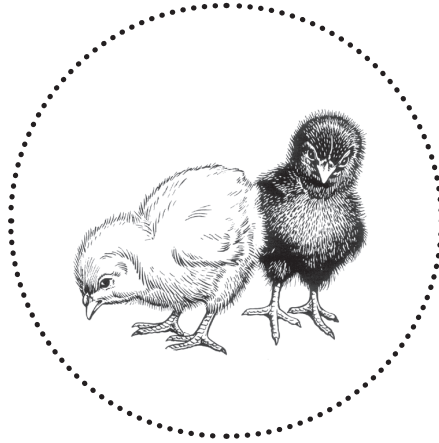


External parasites on chickens

– M.S.K. Mashishi –



- ◇ Parasites are creatures that live on, in or around chickens. They can cause damage directly by disturbing the chickens and affecting their growth and egg production. They can also spread certain diseases.
- ◇ Parasites can occur inside the chicken (internal parasites e.g. worms) or on the outside of the chicken (external parasites e.g. ticks).
- ◇ External parasites include the following: lice, mites, ticks, fleas and flies.
- ◇ Birds get infested with these parasites when new chickens are brought onto the farm and by contact with each other.

LICE

- ◇ Chickens are mainly infested with biting lice.
- ◇ These can irritate chickens and as a result they do not grow well and produce fewer eggs.



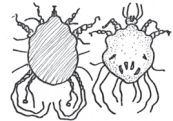
agriculture,
forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

- ◇ Biting lice spend their entire lives on chickens and can be found on the skin around the vent and on the breast and thighs. They feed on skin and feathers.

MITES

- ◇ There are different types of mites that affect chickens. They differ from lice in that they feed on the blood of chickens. As a result chickens do not grow very well. There are three important types of mites in chickens:



Red mite

This is a large mite. It lives in cracks and crevices of chicken houses and feeds mainly at night. Therefore it is difficult to find during the day.

Northern fowl mite

This is a small mite. It stays on the chicken all the time. When there are many of these mites present they can cause blackening of feathers because of mite droppings and mite eggs.

Burrowing mite

- ◇ This mite lives on the chicken. It causes itching and even loss of feathers and/or excessive scaliness, which may lead to thickening and even deformation of the legs.
- ◇ It is important to know the differences between mites because they have different methods of control.

TICKS

- ◇ The most important tick is the soft tick. Ticks also feed on the blood of chickens. They feed for short periods of time on chickens and spend the rest of their time in crevices and cracks.
- ◇ When large numbers occur on chickens they can cause weight loss and a decrease in egg production.
- ◇ They can cause paralysis and can also transmit a disease called spirochaetosis, which is a gut condition that leads to diarrhoea.



FLEAS

There are many kinds of fleas that infect poultry, the most common type is the sticktight flea. They also feed on the blood of chickens. They can survive for a long time in the cages/houses of chickens.



FLIES

- ◇ Flies are usually a source of irritation to chickens, farmers and neighbours. They occur in warm places.
- ◇ They multiply in the bodies of dead animals and in the droppings of chickens.



CONTROL OF PARASITES

- ◇ Cleanliness is very important in controlling parasites. Here are a few management tips on how to keep your chickens and their cages/houses clean:
 - inspect your birds regularly for mites, ticks or fleas
 - remove droppings regularly, once a day if possible
 - clean, wash and disinfect cages/houses
 - remove dead birds as soon as possible.
- ◇ There are various chemicals available to kill these parasites. It is important to know about these parasites so that the correct chemical can be used. Here are a few tips:
- ◇ If the parasite lives on and off the chicken, e.g. in cracks and crevices, then treat the birds and the environment.
- ◇ Before using any chemical make sure that it is correct for the parasite that you want to kill. Read the instructions carefully.
- ◇ Keep these chemicals out of reach of children, pets and livestock.
- ◇ There are specific methods for the various parasites
 - Flies can be controlled by using sprays or larvicides. Fly traps and papers can also be used.
 - Using sprays (e.g. Malasol 1%) or dusts (e.g. Carbadust) can control mites, ticks and fleas. When these parasites are seen, all chickens should be treated. Malasol 1% can be used on the birds and in the

cages/houses. Carbadust should only be dusted on the birds and not in cages/houses.

- Chickens should preferably be kept on concrete floors. However, if they are kept on sand floors, the floors can be sprayed with Malasol 1%. This is to protect the chickens from the soft tick.

For further information contact your nearest animal health technician or state/
private veterinarian

or

Animal Health for Developing Farmers, ARC-Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute
Private Bag X05, Onderstepoort 0110

Tel: 012 529 9158

or

Resource Centre, Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Tel: 012 319 7141/7085

2013 Third print
2006 Second print
2002 First print

Compiled by

Directorate Communication Services
in cooperation with ARC-Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute

Printed and published by

Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Obtainable from

Resource Centre, Directorate Knowledge and Information Management
Private Bag X388, Pretoria, 0001 South Africa

This publication is available on the web: www.daff.gov.za/publications