

Lucky Hens Rescue

Gapeworm Help Sheet

The Gape Worm mainly affects chickens, turkeys and game birds. Gapeworm infestation can occur either directly by birds eating eggs that have been swallowed or coughed up by infested birds, or indirectly by intermediate hosts such as earthworms or snails. Young birds up to 8 weeks of age are particularly susceptible to gape worm. Gapeworms normally live in the trachea (windpipe) but are also found in the bronchi and lungs.

Typically, eggs are picked up from the ground or intermediate hosts such as worms or snails. The eggs hatch and the larvae penetrate the intestine walls and move to the lungs and bronchi. It is here they go through a larval moult, before travelling up to the trachea. Male and female gapeworms attach to one another once they arrive here. This process takes around 7 days. Gapeworm lay eggs that get coughed up onto the ground or swallowed and passed out in the faeces.

Signs Of Gapeworm

Infestation causes respiratory distress. Gasping for breath or 'gaping' as it is known is the biggest sign of gape worm. Shaking of the head and neck stretching are common. When birds are held, gurgling or a 'tracheal rattle' can often be heard. This can often be confused with respiratory infection, if in doubt, check for other signs of respiratory disease. If a heavy infestation occurs, death by suffocation will occur. Fully grown gape worms are 'Y' shaped and vary in size between 1 and 2cm long.

Symptoms

Gasping (gaping), yawning, gurgling / respiratory distress, head shaking, loss of appetite, and eventually coughing and choking. Chickens are particularly prone to respiratory diseases so it is important to ensuring you have a good worming schedule to eliminate the possibility of a respiratory problem being confused with a gape worm infestation. Gurgling noises that come from the throat of the bird can be caused by gapeworm and can be confused with a respiratory problem.

Treatment

Flubenvet 1% is licensed for treating gapeworm.

Our Tips

- We would advise to put Apple Cider Vinegar into the water to help prevent worms and to use Verm-X products.
- Keep feeders & waters clean and make sure your run is changed regularly
- Add garlic to the feed and a crushed garlic clove to the water
- Try our tree chippings if your nearby or try your local council yard

Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT!