

Lucky Hens Rescue

Red Mites Help Sheet

We would say, Red Mites as being one of the biggest problems you will come up against when keeping Hens. Red Mites live in the cracks of Hen houses, the best place to check for them is under the end of the perches they come out at night and get onto your Hens to feed off them.

They start off as very small greyish-white mites that swell up into red coloured mites after a feed. They are only tiny little things even at the biggest point, approx 0.7mm so small numbers of them can be hard to spot unless you know what you are looking for.

You will often find a section of grey ash like section around perch ends which is where the mites have been and if you can pick up the perch and look on the underside you are likely to find a large section of mites there when they have moved in.

Red Mite in Hens Coops are active during the warmer months, typically May through to October and will lay dormant over the winter. They multiply at an incredible rate: their life cycle is just 7 days! In other words from hatching from an egg to being an adult laying hundreds of eggs takes just 7 days if conditions are right.

The best course of action is to check for red mite routinely, when you clean your Hen Coops out and use some preventative treatments to the house before they get a hold. You will get to know the places to look and once you have found small numbers of them, you must treat the coop to keep numbers under control.

How to check to see if you have Red Mites?

Best way to check for red mites is to take a piece of plain white kitchen roll and rub it along the underside of the perch when your hens are roosting at night, as this is when they come out to feed on the hens. Look at the tissue and if there are Red Mites heading back from their feed, they will be squashed on the kitchen roll, and you will see streaks of blood on the tissue.

How do you get rid of Red Mites?

It is very hard to get rid of them completely so it is often better to get the numbers down and then find a way of keeping them down that doesn't involve you spending hours on end cleaning the coop! There are lots of different treatments that people use, some more effective than others but we focus on what we do and have found to be the most successful for us!

- Remove all birds from the house
- Strip the house down as much as possible
- Clean the house out, be very careful where the bedding is going, as red mites can live for 6 months without feeding, and will find a new home if they can. Ideally seal the bedding in bin bags or burn it
- Mix up as many watering cans of Smite Fluid as needed, as per the instructions on the label
- Ensure ALL cracks in the hen coop are covered, concentrating where there are perch ends and concentrations of red mite
- Leave to soak for 15 minutes+
- Red mites will be coming out, cover them and the cracks with Smite Fluid again and wait another 15 minutes
- Hose the house out, concentrating on getting the pressure jet into the cracks and so on
- Leave the house to dry

We say "Prevention better than a cure"

D.E Smite (Diatomaceous Earth) Powder

- Dust the ends of the perches/nest boxes and wherever else you have found concentrations of red mites when cleaning
- Rub as much into the perches as you can, red mite will avoid the diatom and will crawl around if they can, so make sure they have to crawl through it to feed.
- Repeat every couple of days for as long as you see signs of red mite in the coop
- Repeat the whole cleaning process if there are still lots of mites in 5 – 7 days. You will find you might not have to spend as long washing as there won't be as many mites

Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT!