



WENSUM VALLEY VETS NEWSLETTER

Small Holders' Club Talk



This month saw another Smallholders' Club meeting on the topic of Farm Animal First Aid, sponsored by NoBacz. Thank you to everyone who came!

This newsletter explains some of the most common conditions we can diagnose and what they mean for your birds.



Common Diseases in Game Birds

As we move through the season game birds are beginning to be released. Post-mortem examinations are a vital tool in understanding why birds may not be thriving, and they often provide quick, practical answers to health problems on your shoot.

Hexamita (Spiroucleosis)

- What it is: A protozoal parasite that affects the gut, particularly in young birds
- Signs in the flock: Poor growth, weight loss, watery diarrhoea and increased mortality
- Post-mortem findings: Damage to the intestinal lining, pinpoint haemorrhages, or thickened gut walls depending on the species of coccidia involved, visualisation of moving parasites on microscopy
- Prevention: Good hygiene, clean water supply. There is no specific treatment but strategic use of medications is sometimes advised

Coccidiosis

- What it is: Another protozoal parasite causing significant gut damage
- Signs in the flock: Dullness, poor weight gain, diarrhoea and mortality



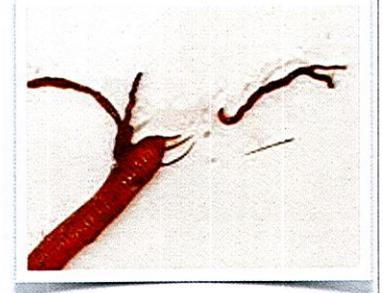
- Post-mortem findings: Swollen, watery intestines, often with a distinctive foul smell, mucus plugs in the caeca, eggs seen on microscopy
- Prevention: Correct use of anticoccidial medications, good litter hygiene, and controlled exposure in young birds

Worm Burdens

- What it is: a number of types of roundworm are common in game birds
- Signs in the flock: Weight loss, uneven growth, poor feathering and, in heavy infections, death
- Post-mortem findings: Visible worms in the gut, or damage to the intestinal wall, eggs on WEC or microscopy
- Prevention: Worm egg counting (WEC) and a strategic worming programme tailored to your birds

Gapeworm (*Syngamus trachea*)

- What it is: A worm that lodges in the trachea (windpipe)
- Signs in the flock: Gasping for breath, stretching of the neck, coughing, and increased mortality
- Post-mortem findings: Characteristic red “Y-shaped” worms in the trachea
- Prevention: Effective worming strategy and management of intermediate hosts (e.g. earthworms)



Respiratory Disease

- What it is: A broad category covering bacterial, viral, and mycoplasma infections
- Signs in the flock: Sneezing/snicking, coughing, nasal discharge, swollen sinuses, reduced growth and performance
- Post-mortem findings: Foamy exudate in the trachea or lungs, pus in the sinuses, inflamed air sacs
- Prevention: Good ventilation, reduced stocking density, biosecurity, and vaccination where available

Why Post-Mortems Matter

A post-mortem can often reveal more than outward signs, helping us pinpoint the exact cause of losses. This means:

- Faster, targeted treatment
- Reduced unnecessary medication
- Improved health and welfare in the flock

If you are experiencing higher than expected mortality or poor growth, please contact us promptly. Bringing in a two/three live (but sick) birds for postmortem is recommended. Early investigation saves time, money, and birds. Our vets are here to help you plan proactive health strategies to reduce losses and improve the performance of your game birds.

For advice or to arrange a post-mortem, please call the practice on 01328864444

