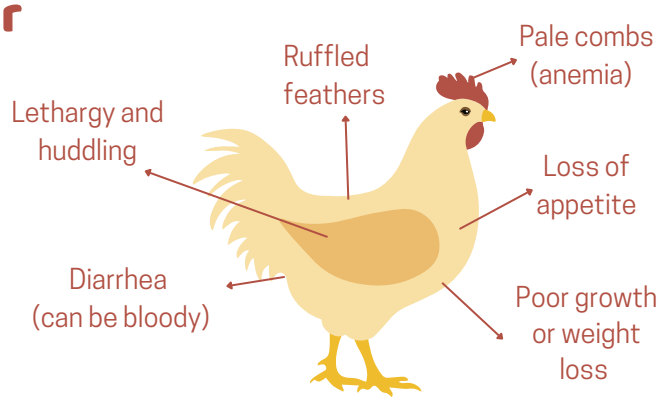
Coccidiosis

SMALL FLOCKS COLLABORATIVE

Coccidiosis is caused by protozoa, tiny parasites that damage the intestinal lining. Disease can result in poor nutrient absorption, weight loss, slow growth, poor health, and even death. Young birds are more likely to get sick. **Birds become infected when they ingest oocysts (parasite eggs)** in contaminated feed, water, soil, or droppings. Coccidiosis spreads quickly and can infect the whole flock if not treated.

Signs to Look For

One sick bird may be the first sign of a bigger problem. The parasites spread quickly. Its life cycle takes 4 to 7 days and can infect your whole flock before many birds show symptoms.



How Coccidiosis Spreads

- Infected chickens shed oocysts in their droppings.
- Birds ingest oocysts from contaminated feed, water, litter, or soil.
- Warm, damp conditions help oocysts survive and spread.
- Wild birds can shed oocysts, especially to outdoor flocks.

One infected bird can shed millions of oocysts each day.

Quick Facts

- Caused by Eimeria protozoan parasites
- **Spreads quickly** and can cause **severe illness** or **death**
- Can infect turkeys, ducks, geese, and gamebirds, each species has its own type of Coccidiosis
- Does **not** spread to or infect humans
- Most common during **warm, wet** months

Prevention

1. Keep the Coop Clean and Dry

- Coccidia thrive in wet, dirty litter.
- Change bedding often, especially if it gets wet from spills or droppings.

2. Use Feeders and Waterers

- Don't feed birds directly on the ground.
- Keep food and water containers clean to prevent contamination with droppings.

3. Give the Flock Space

- Overcrowding stresses birds and allows disease to spread.

4. Reduce Stress

- Stress weakens immunity and make birds more susceptible to disease.
- Reduce drafts, sudden diet changes, or crowding.

5. Handle Healthy Birds First

- Care for birds in this order: young → adults → sick, to avoid spreading germs.
- Wash or sanitize hands and equipment between different bird groups.

When Birds Get Sick

1. Work with a Veterinarian

- Diagnosis is based on signs, a fecal test for oocysts, or a necropsy.
- Contact your veterinarian for guidance on testing.

2. Treat with Medication

- Your veterinarian can recommend the right medication.

3. Don't Spread Disease

- To stop the spread, don't introduce new birds or sell birds until the outbreak is over.
- Keep different age groups separate; older birds can pass the parasite on to younger ones.

4. Plan Long-Term Management

- Your veterinarian can help you create a plan to keep your flock healthy and prevent future outbreaks.

Find out more at
www.healthybirds.info