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Introduction

The chicken mite (*Dermanyssus gallinae*) or red mite is seen from time to time in all kinds of flocks. These mites are easily seen once they have had a blood meal (hence their name).

Red mites have been known to transmit diseases such as fowl cholera. They are transmitted to poultry from rodents and wild birds.

Unlike the northern fowl mite, red mites only spend part of their lives on their poultry hosts. They live in cracks and crevices in the poultry house and move on to the roosting birds at night to feed.

Red mites can survive away from poultry for four or so weeks and they can also infest farm staff.

Signs

Affected birds can experience weight loss and egg drops. They also show signs of anaemia (pale combs and wattles).

Life cycle

Egg >>> Larva >>> Protonymph >>> Deutonymph >>> Adult

Within 12-24 hours of her first blood meal a fertilised female can lay a batch of 3-7 eggs in the poultry house.

The eggs hatch in 2-3 days and the larva, which does not feed, moults in a further day or so. The protonymph feeds and takes a blood meal. It then moults to a deutonymph, which does not feed. The deutonymph moults to the adult stage in a couple of days.

Under ideal conditions the life cycle can be completed in a week or so but, if conditions are not ideal, both the feeding stages can survive several weeks before taking a blood meal.

Control

The use and reliance on chemical controls is decreasing because of lack of availability, products being withdrawn in many countries, regulatory controls, development of resistance, environmental impact and consumer/public opinion.

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