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Wild birds

Diseases are most likely to spread between animals if they are closely related. Thus, poultry disease is most likely to be carried by birds. The most closely related bird species, for example pheasants, share quite a few diseases with poultry. Thus, we need to segregate poultry from wild birds – something which is quite easy to achieve with modern housing, but impossible to achieve with outdoor production.

Droppings

When we talk about wild birds we really mean their droppings. You need to consider how wild bird droppings can get into the poultry house, for example on bedding materials. Is your bedding material store wild bird proof? Do not drag bales of shavings or straw over the ground outside the poultry house as this may be contaminated with wild bird droppings. This has been known to introduce Newcastle disease into housed poultry. Wild bird droppings can contaminate feed and water before either ever reaches your farm!

Mycoplasma

The wild bird which gets into your poultry house represents a greater risk. A good example of this was with *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* in the USA a few years ago. There was widespread infection with *M. gallisepticum* in the wild finch population – if the wild finches were kept outside the poultry house (even if just by wire netting) the poultry remained healthy; if they got into the house the poultry often succumbed to mycoplasmosis. This was probably because the finches were contaminating feed and water rather than transmitting the *M. gallisepticum* via the respiratory route. Thus, it is very important to keep poultry in houses which wild birds can not access.

Control

Control has three facets Firstly, siting the farm away from free standing water that attracts wild waterfowl, secondly, making the poultry site as unattractive as possible for wild birds and, thirdly, having wild bird proofed poultry houses.

The second of these includes avoiding feed spillages, having no water available, such as leaking taps, and having no roosting or nesting sites available.

When it comes to wild bird proof houses they should be regularly checked to see that they are secure. On such checks common findings include badly fitting doors, holes in wire netting and having a 4" diameter hole for a 2" pipe. Roosting points can often be identified by wild bird droppings on the floor immediately beneath them.

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