Diseases of Malnutrition in Poultry

H. L. Shivaprasad
California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory System – Tulare Branch
University of California, Davis

Nutrition

- It is a process of furnishing cells inside the animal with that portion of external environment for optimum functioning of metabolic and chemical reactions (M. Scott)
- It involves procurement, ingestion, digestion and absorption. Failure in any of these steps will result in malnutrition
- Nutrients: essential for normal growth, work, development, livability, and reproduction
- Nutrients should be in the diets in proper concentration and balance

Functions of Nutrients

- **Proteins**: involved in structural parts, homeostasis, osmotic pressure, clotting mechanism and transport oxygen, vitamins, etc.
- **Carbohydrates** are the primary source of metabolizable energy. Chickens lack lactase
- **Fats** are source of energy, linoleic acid and arachidonic acid
  - Constituents of cell organelles, membranes, adipose tissue and precursors of prostaglandins
- **Vitamins** are a heterogeneous group of fat-soluble and water-soluble compounds. All vitamins, except C, are essential
- **Essential inorganic elements** include Ca, P, Mn, Cu, Fe, Zn, Selenium, Na, Cl, K, Mg, water and oxygen
  - Some are components of bone and soft tissues
  - They are essential for maintenance of osmotic pressure, acid-base balance, muscle and nerve stimuli and activation of enzymes
  - Functions of specific inorganic elements
    - **Calcium** (Ca) is essential for bone and egg shell formation, for clotting and cellular metabolism and processes
    - **Phosphorus** (P) is necessary for bone formation, components of compounds and cells, metabolism and acid-base balance
    - **Manganese** (Mn) is essential for bone and egg shell formation and activator of enzymes
    - **Copper** (Cu): necessary for hemoglobin and collagen, is a component of enzymes (superoxide dismutase, cytochrome oxidase)
    - **Iron** (Fe) is part of hemoglobin, cytochromes, component of enzymes (catalase, peroxidase, etc.)
    - **Zinc** (Zn): activates enzymes, component of carbonic anhydrase
    - **Selenium** (Se) is a cofactor of glutathione peroxidase
    - **Sodium** (Na) and **chloride** (Cl) are involved in membrane potentials, hydrogen ion concentration, cellular transport processes
      - Chloride is a major anion, helps in ionic balance
    - **Potassium** (K) is a major cation, necessary for membrane potential, cellular fluid balance and biochemical reactions and heart activity
- Magnesium (Mg) necessary for bone formation, activates enzymes and involved in carbohydrate metabolism
- Water is the medium upon which body chemistry functions
- Oxygen releases energy from food stuffs

**Malnutrition**
- Can be due to absolute or marginal deficiency of nutrients
- Marginal deficiency is probably more common
- Effects of Malnutrition:
  - Can manifest as generalized or a specific disease resulting in increased morbidity, mortality and secondary infections
  - Suppresses immune system
  - Decrease in reproductive performance
  - Decreased weight gain, egg production and egg shell quality
  - Result in feather problems and decreased response to therapeutic agents

**Factors that Influence Malnutrition**
- Diet composition (deficiency or absence of nutrients)
- Human errors:
  - omission of ingredient(s)
  - equipment failure
  - improper mixing and storage
  - miscomputation in feed formulations
  - feeding to wrong species, sex or age
- Insufficient feed intake (anorexia, starvation)
- Poor nutritive value and poor shelf life
- Malabsorption and malabsorption
- Nutrient and mineral interactions

**Diagnoses of Diseases caused by Malnutrition**
- History, clinical signs, gross and microscopic lesions
- Analysis of feed
- Analysis of liver for heavy metals, vitamins and others
- Serum for analysis of Ca and P, trace minerals and others
- Feeding trials
- Peroxide (rancidity) level in the feed
- Response to treatment
Diseases of Malnutrition

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<th>Name of the disease</th>
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<td>Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine)</td>
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<td>Choline/Manganese</td>
<td>Slipped tendon</td>
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<td>Pantothenic acid/Biotin</td>
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<td>Niacin, Folic acid</td>
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<td>Others: Zinc, Copper, Salt, Methionine, Vitamins K and B12</td>
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**Xerophthalmia** *(Vitamin A deficiency)* is rare in commercial poultry but seen in backyard poultry occasionally.

- **Clinical signs:** drooling of mucus from the mouth, corneal opacity, conjunctivitis, ruffled feathers, decreased weight gain and egg production.
- **Gross lesions:** nodules in upper Gastro Intestinal (GI) tract, exudate in conjunctiva, respiratory tract, bursa of Fabricius, nephrosis, opaque dry cornea, hyperkeratosis of plantar surfaces

Figure 1: Eye - Vitamin A deficiency. Conjunctivitis in a chicken

Figure 2: Eye - Vitamin A deficiency. Corneal opacity in a golden pheasant
Figure 3: Upper GI tract - Vitamin A deficiency in chickens. Nodules due to squamous metaplasia of glands

Figure 4: Upper GI tract - Vitamin A deficiency in chickens. Impaction of esophageal glands

Figure 5: Vitamin A deficiency, turkey. Exudate in the nasolacrimal duct

Figure 6: Vitamin A deficiency, turkey. Exudate in upper GI tract.

Figure 7: Vitamin A deficiency, turkey. Exudate in the tracheal lumen
Microscopic lesions: hallmark lesion is “squamous metaplasia” of the epithelium and hyperkeratosis. Squamous metaplasia may or may not have keratin formation and exudation of the mucosal and submucosal glands. Most commonly affected organs are:

- Proximal esophagus and conjunctiva are more consistently affected than others
- Cornea, salivary glands in tongue and choana, pharynx, proventriculus, kidneys
- Lacrimal gland, salt gland, gland of harder, sinuses, turbinates, larynx, trachea, bronchi, parabronchi
- Bursa of Fabricius, feather follicles

Figure 8: Vitamin A deficiency, turkey. Exudate in the bursa of Fabricius

Figure 9: Vitamin A deficiency, Chicken esophagus. Squamous metaplasia, esophageal glands

Figure 10: Vitamin A deficiency. Squamous metaplasia. Chicken trachea

Figure 11: Vitamin A deficiency. Squamous metaplasia. Poult esophagus
1. Eye - Vitamin A deficiency Conjunctivitis in a chicken
2. Eye - Vitamin A deficiency
   Corneal opacity
   in a golden pheasant