

Prevention

- Prevention of histomoniasis is based on three principals: (1) controlling *Heterakis gallinarum*, (2) separation of susceptible avian species from birds that are reservoirs of *Histomonas meleagridis* and/or *Heterakis gallinarum*, and (3) stringent biosecurity measures.
 - Early and frequent deworming for *Heterakis gallinarum* before and after an outbreak can be beneficial. However, in turkeys, where the infection spreads easily from bird to bird, this is probably not of value after outbreaks start. Between flocks, salt can be applied to the floor of the poultry house. Salt dehydrates worm eggs killing the larvae. Salt must not be put on top of litter as the birds may eat it and develop salt toxicity.
 - As broiler breeder farms are considered heavily contaminated with infectious *Heterakis gallinarum* eggs, all-in-all out production, thorough cleaning of the house and areas outside the house, and use of new bedding material between broiler breeder replacement flocks are essential to minimize exposure of subsequent flocks to the eggs. *Heterakis gallinarum* eggs are resistant to commonly used disinfectants and can live in the soil for many years. Failure to thoroughly clean the farm between flocks usually results in early exposure of birds to histomonad-bearing eggs of *Heterakis gallinarum* and subsequent disease at a young age.
 - Stringent biosecurity measures should be taken to minimize the likelihood of tracking *Heterakis gallinarum* eggs into poultry houses, especially turkey houses. For turkeys, the source of the eggs is usually chickens or other game birds that are found close to the turkey farm. *Heterakis gallinarum* eggs are usually carried on the shoes and possibly clothes of farm workers.

Prevention (continued)

- Turkeys should not be raised on ground previously used by chickens unless several years have passed. However, one must keep in mind that heavy losses from histomoniasis have occurred in turkey flocks raised on ground that was used 5+ years earlier by chickens.
- Raising birds on wire floors will reduce the ingestion of *Heterakis gallinarum* eggs.
- Nitarsone is currently the only drug registered in the USA for preventing histomoniasis. It is a feed additive labeled “as an aid in the prevention of blackhead in turkeys and chickens”. It is not effective in treating birds that are already affected with the disease. As with other medications, the label should be read carefully and followed before using the product.



Broiler breeder replacement, 4 weeks, histomoniasis. The abdomen is distended with fluid (ascites). The liver is enlarged and extends beyond the rib cage.



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