

Red mites: monitoring method and treatment

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Red mites are a problem that many poultry keepers are facing. If the infestation is severe anaemia and even death can occur. Other symptoms are emaciated birds, a drop in egg production and lower resistance to infections. The birds are usually restless and blood spots can be found on the eggs. However, not only do birds suffer; these external parasites also cause itchiness and sometimes bite marks with the staff handling the birds. Studies also confirmed that these parasites can be the transmitters for various diseases, for example Salmonella and E. coli. It is therefore obvious that efficient treatment is a must and can only be achieved if good monitoring takes place. During several laying periods the red mite infestation was monitored using the MMS, Mite Monitoring Score, a method based on regular checks of different places in the housing system. Depending on the score, treatment was carried out and therefore different products were used and evaluated. The best results were obtained using silica products, which resulted in controlling the infestation at an acceptable level. Recently treatment also involved the heating of the housing facility to approximately 42°C on the ground before arrival of the birds. Combined with a relative humidity of around 15% this method destroys the mites and eggs are dried out. The first results show a longer mite-free period and further testing and monitoring is being carried out. In order to combat red mites in poultry houses a combination of good monitoring and efficient treatment is necessary.

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