

Blackhead Disease: Best Practice Recommendations



Blackhead disease, aka Histomoniasis is a disease caused by *Histomonas meleagridis*. As there are currently no approved vaccines or treatments for licensed use in Canada, it is extremely important to have good biosecurity practices to limit the introduction and spread of *Histomonas* within the flock.

Biosecurity is key

- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash your hands before/after going into the barn.
- Wear new coveralls and boots with each barn visit.
- Perform barn visits from youngest to oldest flocks.
- Make sure external personnel (e.g. catching/cleaning crew) follow the same biosecurity protocols with PPE and handwashing.
- Restrict outside visitors whenever possible.



Downtime between flocks

- Have extended "dry cleaned" downtime between flock, with at least 2 weeks downtime for each barn.
- "Dry cleaned" means the barn is completely cleaned, disinfected, and dried.



Equipment & machinery

- Do not share equipment or machinery with other farms, especially with those that manage different poultry species.
- Equipment and machinery should be housed indoors.
- Do not use equipment and machinery that has been used outside (e.g. rototiller).
- Always clean and disinfect any equipment and machinery before using them in the barn.



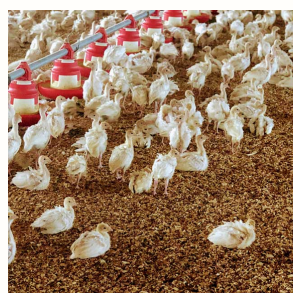
Keep insects out

- Follow label instructions for proper pesticide use.
- Rotate different classes of pesticide with each cycle.
- Target insecticide application to edges and beams of the barn before bird placement.
- Apply salt and pesticide to the perimeters to prevent earthworms and insects from entering the barn.



Litter management

- Do not reuse contaminated or old litter between flocks.
- Do not have on-site shaving storage.
- Fully remove all litter with each stage (not just with brooders!).
- Manure is cleaned out with full blow down and power washed. Concrete floor must be fully dried and/or heat treated before placing fresh shavings.



Husbandry

- Create a routine deworming program with your vet to bolster bird gut health.
- Decrease bird stress (e.g. avoid feed interruption from feed outage, feed pens are not filled with litter, decrease CO2 concentration in the barn)
- Decrease heat stress with misters or evaporative cooling.
- Reduce the time between feed placement and bird placement.



Barn maintenance & repair

- Cracks and crevices on the floors and walls in the barn should be routinely filled and sealed.
- Gaps on doorways should be properly sealed to prevent vermin and insects from entering the barn.
- Build partitions near barn doors to prevent drafts, or to act as barriers to prevent birds from eating earthworms and other insects outside of the barn.



What to do if you suspect Blackhead

- Call your vet ASAP if birds appear sick. Your vet may perform a necropsy and/or send samples to the AHC lab for confirmatory diagnosis of Blackhead.
- Prompt removal of dead birds and contaminated litter off-farm.
- Practice good hand washing hygiene after handling dead and sick birds.
- Make sure equipment and machinery used to handle dead or sick birds are cleaned and disinfected.
- Cull birds that look lethargic or depressed.
- Move the flock to a clean barn with clean litter.



For more information on Blackhead disease, or to learn more about the program, email m.benoitebcturkey.com or visit <http://www.bcturkey.com>