

Red Mites

What are red mites?

Red mites (*Dermanyssus gallinae*) are mites which live in the environment, but then suck on blood of chickens. They are sensitive to light, so adult and nymph stages will only emerge at night. Even if you have never had a problem before and have not bought any new animals, you may still see red mites in your flock as wildlife can be a vector for the parasite.

Clinical signs

As mites live in the environment, it is unlikely for you to see mites on the animal. Indications of a red mite infestation include:

- Blood spots or streaks on eggs
- Signs of anaemia
 - Pale comb and wattle
 - Pale mucus membranes
 - Lethargy
 - Reduction in egg production
 - Death
- Pecking – chickens are naturally inquisitive so may peck another bird if they see a red mite on them.

Diagnosis

A definitive diagnosis can be difficult if the chicken is brought into the practice with no mites present. Traps are commercially available, which can mean that the mites can then be identified via microscopy. Please talk to one of our vet team for more information on the diagnosis of red mites.

Call Drove Farm Vets for more information or with any concerns:

01793 501 499

Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

Treatment and control

The control and treatment of red mites can be frustrating and requires a multifactorial approach. Including:

- Cleaning – red mites live in the environment so the housing needs to be cleaned thoroughly. Please take note to use a legal and licensed cleaning product. If you would like advice on this please contact one of the vet team. In order to prevent re-establishment of the red mite population, housing should initially be cleaned three times at weekly intervals. This can then be reduced once the population has been controlled.
- Bedding – after clearing out, new, uncontaminated bedding should be used.
- Limit contact with wild birds – although this risk cannot be 100% controlled. Considering position of the coop, bird baths and feeders in relation to wild bird nests, can help to limit the contact.
- Responsible sourcing – although mites live in the environment, transport boxes and bedding can easily act as vectors for mite transmission. Buying from a well-respected breeder not only reduces the risk of bringing in red mites, but also other diseases.
- Biological control – predator mites can be used to control a red mite population.