

MORE ABOUT DOVE DISEASES

by

Wilmer J. Miller

In my previous article on diseases of doves, I did not mean to imply that those were all the ills of doves nor even that they were all I had seen. I also have had some experience with pox, "wet eye" gout and roup, for example. I'm sure that most of the pigeon's diseases noted by Levi in "The Pigeon" are also potentially or actually found in doves.

I have had pox twice in my doves. Once was long ago in Oklahoma, and just last fall it appeared here in Iowa in my indoor pens. Neither time was it a really serious disease. A vaccination by a veterinarian can prevent it, but I have never bothered. I think the original infection in a loft or bird colony comes about mainly from mosquito bites from an infected bird to a previously uninfected one. Scabs from wild birds may be another source. One to several bumps are raised on the nares, mouth, head, shoulders or feet. The bumps turn into scabs. Typically, the birds go out of production for 3 to 4 months. But if their nutrition is good, recovery is complete and uneventful.

To prevent the pox from spreading, isolate the infected birds, prevent mechanical injuries (e.g. pecking and fighting scratches) and keep mosquitoes away! Well that's pretty difficult to accomplish, so in practice, the disease often will spread through one's entire stock anyway. Months later the bumps regress, and I believe the birds are no longer potential sources of infection. Levi recommends a sulfur treatment.

Sore eye or one eye colds were sporadically common in my outside doves in Oklahoma and in doves kept indoors at the University of Wisconsin many years ago (1940-1950). So it occurs among birds outside or indoors. The eye runs and often plugs up, often with nasal discharge also noted. A bird's wing may get wet and dirty from the bird's rubbing the eye on the feathers of the shoulder and wrist. I have considered (probably unjustly) such birds to be unthrifty and seldom used them for breeding even after a "recovery". The causitive organism is not known, but aureomycin treatment works well according to Levi.

Roup (colds) also bother doves leaving them generally unthrifty. Ornithosis may be confused with such diseases and is generally not easily diagnosed even by a veterinarian.

Gout is deposition of uric acid crystals in the tissues. Doves can get gout; but it is rare. Their feet get visibly white swellings under the scales and the internal organs also get deposits. The birds don't want to move, but they look all right in the beginning, just sitting around. Finally, they begin to slowly starve.

I had several gouty doves at the University of California in the late 1950's that I attributed to excessively high protein diet. I'm not so sure now. Here at Iowa I've had half a dozen sporadic cases. Dr. Flatt, a veterinarian, tried to reproduce it, but could not. I haven't tried to treat

it, and since it can't be produced at will yet, not much can be said.

Red mites infested my nest boxes back in Oklahoma in the 1940's. The mites would seldom kill, but often injure the growing squabs, especially their eyes. Direct sunlight would cause them to crawl away into crevices and under feces, but back they would come later. DDT was the solution then. Now many other insecticides also would get rid of them.

Feather lice eventually occur on birds kept outside, but they are usually not overly bothersome. All doves I take indoors lose the lice after a few months!

I'm sure many other dove breeders have some different experiences to relate.

E. coli

Chlamydia psittaci

ADA Dec 74

RS. & G.W. 1976 1:36-37