



ABOUT

Marek's Disease is by far one of the most common illnesses in small flocks and not treatable once the clinical signs have begun. Yet, it is one of the most preventable illnesses out there. Marek's Disease affects chickens and is caused by a chicken herpes virus. It will not make people sick. Like many herpes viruses, once an animal becomes infected, it will be infected **for life**. Not all infected birds, however, will get sick. The percentage of clinically sick birds in a flock depends on the strain of virus (some virus strains are more virulent than others) and the breed of bird. Birds become infected with Marek's Disease by inhaling virus-laden dander. While the virus is easily killed in its purified form, the virus can live for years in the dander. This means that once the disease enters a coop, the environment will most likely be contaminated for a very long time (months to years) even if all birds are gone.

SIGNS

The symptoms of Marek's Disease depend on which tissues are attacked. In the classic form, Marek's Disease will cause inflammation and tumors in the nerves, spinal column, and brain. In this form, birds will become paralyzed in the legs, or wings or may develop head tremors. Affected birds eventually die of starvation or are trampled or get severe sores on their body. They almost never recover from this

TREATMENT

Vaccination of day old baby chicks is the most dependable way to prevent the clinical disease. **Birds must get the vaccine before they are exposed to the virus.** Then the birds need about 4-7 days for the vaccine to do its work. That means complete isolation of the chicks for at least this time. Caretakers should shower and **change clothes if needed to go back and forth between age groups. Again, this is for at least 4 days.**