

Selecting Birds for Laboratory Examination

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On-Farm Diagnosis

Modern poultry farms represent a large investment and money can easily be lost from a wrong diagnosis or wrong medication. Only a limited number of poultry diseases can be accurately identified or diagnosed without laboratory aids, and attempting to diagnose all poultry diseases on the farm can be costly. If you suspect a disease outbreak on your farm, always use the diagnostic laboratory in your area to get an accurate diagnosis.

Selecting Specimens

It is possible for more than one disease condition to be present in the flock at the same time. To get the most accurate diagnosis, take several live birds that show typical symptoms of a suspected disease to the diagnostic laboratory. A one-bird sample will not be representative. The poorest, most long-standing culls in the flock are not the type of birds to take to the laboratory. For baby chicks up to three weeks of age, take 10 to 12 birds. For birds older than three weeks, take five or six birds.

The pathologist needs three things to perform a successful examination: 1) live, sick birds, 2) a complete, detailed flock history and 3) to talk with someone familiar with the farm's operation. If a person familiar with the farm's operation cannot go with the birds, **send the flock history**. Without this history, the pathologist's knowledge of the flock is limited. A field visit may be necessary in some cases to observe management practices and the pattern of diseases on the farm.

Collecting History

Each diagnostic laboratory requires the same basic information, found in the sample form below.

Grower _____ P.O. _____ Co. _____
Dealer _____ P.O. _____
Hatchery _____ P.O. _____
Breed: Broiler _____ Breeder Flock _____ Other _____
No. in Flock _____ No. of Specimens _____ Age _____ Illness First Seen _____ Ago
Evidence of Illness _____
Losses Last Three Days (1) _____ (2) _____ (3) _____ Before Illness _____
Vacc. History _____
Medication _____

The flock “history” is valuable when investigating poultry disease problems and often offers the key that helps distinguish between the two similar-looking diseases. The flock history, presented to the veterinarian at the diagnostic laboratory, helps provide accurate disease diagnosis, treatment recommendations and preventative measures.

Time Required for Diagnosis

A final diagnosis report can take between one day and several weeks to complete since more time is necessary to grow some types of bacteria and for virus isolation. Many laboratories give a preliminary report, if requested, as soon as the birds are examined. However, it may be necessary to change this tentative diagnosis as more information is accumulated. The ultimate objective is to accurately identify the disease.

Applying Laboratory Results

Lab results are often confusing. Don’t be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help interpreting the data. The veterinarian and diagnostic laboratories are eager to help you as much as possible.

Applying lab recommendations “to the letter” is necessary for the greatest benefit; however, laboratory reports are not intended to give detailed coverage of all measures that need to be carried out. Most reports emphasize specific measures applying to the problem in question.

In general, observe the sick flock closely for reactions to drugs and to monitor the birds’ food and water consumption. Observe any change in symptoms, which could indicate a change in the course of the disease or possible development of other diseases. Should changes occur, it may be necessary to consult again with the laboratory to determine whether further examinations or changes in control measures are necessary.

Georgia Poultry Diagnostic Laboratories

The Poultry Disease Research Center
958 College Station Road
Athens, GA 30605
706/542-1904

The Georgia Poultry Laboratory
345 Barr Ave
Bowden, GA 30108
770/258-0300

The Georgia Poultry Laboratory
400 Burson Rd
Camilla, GA 31730
229/336-0001

The Georgia Poultry Laboratory
P. O. Box 349
Canton, GA 30114
404/479-2901

The Georgia Poultry Laboratory
P.O. Box 672
Carnesville, GA 30521
706/384-2387

The Georgia Poultry Laboratory
1126 Lamar Street
Dalton, GA 30720
404/278-7806

The Georgia Poultry Laboratory
175 Airport Circle
Douglas, GA 31533
912/384-3719

The Georgia Poultry Laboratory
222 Industrial Park Rd.
Forsyth, GA 31029
478/994-1219

The Georgia Poultry Laboratory
1221 S. Downing Musgrove Rd.
Glennville, GA 30527
912/654-0504

The Georgia Poultry Laboratory
150 Airport Drive
Montezuma, GA 31063
478/472-9904

The Georgia Poultry Laboratory
P. O. Box 20
Oakwood, GA 30566
404/532-2265

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