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A note on the occurrence of stick tight fleas in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Echidnophaga gallinacea called as sticktight flea are known to affect mainly the poultry – worldwide. The fleas attach themselves to the hairless parts of the body such as areas around the eyes, wattles etc. Young birds are more severely affected and in heavy infestation, ulceration around the eyes and blindness are the common clinical manifestations in affected birds. Young fowls and birds can die from this infestation mainly due to anaemia. In an organized desi chicken farm of 150 desi chicken birds, 12 young chicks were infested with *Echidnophaga gallinacea* around the eyes and 5 of them have been found to have died of anaemia. The remaining 7 chicks were treated with Deltamethrin as an external application @ 1.25% concentration and were found free off the fleas after three days.

Keywords: *Echidnophaga gallinacea*, desi chicken, anaemia, infestation

Introduction

Echidnophaga gallinacea, the stick-tight flea is a common ecto-parasite of poultry. Young birds are more severely affected and in heavy infestation, ulceration around the eyes and blindness are the common clinical manifestations in affected birds (Lalitha and Joseph, 1982)^[1]. Poultry may develop clusters of the fleas around the eyes, comb, wattles, and other bare spots. They are difficult to remove because their heads are embedded in the host's flesh and they cannot be brushed off. Female fleas attach at one site on their hosts and feed for prolonged periods, causing tissue to become swollen and ulcerated. Eggs are laid in the ulcers that have formed on the host's skin. Young birds may die from infestation, due to anemia produced by the fleas' feeding.



Methods

Flea infestation was observed in an organized desi chicken unit belonging to Mr. S. Karthick, Anil street, Chinnamettupalayam, Coimbatore during our routine farm visits. The birds, especially the young ones were heavily infested with the fleas mainly around the eyes. The birds were restless, off-feed and very weak. The fleas were collected in 70% alcohol and sent to the Department of Veterinary Parasitology, Madras Veterinary College, Chennai for identification.

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Results

The flea was identified as *Echidnophaga gallinacea* as per the distinct morphological characters described by Soulsby (1982) [2].

Conclusion

Echidnophaga gallinacea infestation was observed around the eyes in 12 young chicks maintained in an organized desi chicken farm with 150 desi chicken birds at Coimbatore. Five young chicks have been found to have died of anaemia. The remaining 7 chicks were treated with Deltamethrin as an external application @ 1.25% concentration and were found free off the fleas after three days. The flea infestation is restricted to hill and sub montane districts like Coimbatore and was also reported earlier in Coimbatore during the year 2013.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

References

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2. Soulsby EJJ. Helminths, arthropods and protozoa of domesticated animals. 7th Ed. London, UK: ELBS; 1982.

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