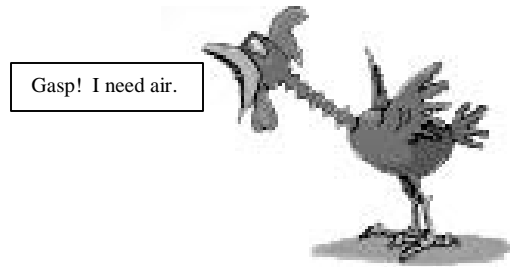


“DON'T COUNT THOSE UNEXPLAINED OCCASIONAL UNEXPLAINED DEATHS AS ROUTINE!”

By: K. J. Theodore

OXINE & Upper Respiratory Fungal Infections



There's a reason for most of those deaths, and it's usually an *undetected* UPPER RESPIRATORY FUNGAL INFECTION. There are numerous upper respiratory ailments and I'm not going to cover each one here. Instead, I'll address fungal infections from the most basic of causes, the connection to our environment, and an exciting new treatment. Sound complicated? It's not.

Following damp weather or after drying out damp coop conditions, the molds that were once actively growing lose the dampness they need to live. When they do, they 'sporulate' into mold spores in order to survive for later reproduction. In their mold spore state, they become airborne or stay in litter or sand dust and can be inhaled by our birds. Once inhaled, the spores find a new damp environment in the lungs and trachea of a bird where their growth creates an upper respiratory fungal infection.

Birds that are otherwise strong and healthy can usually fight off a mild infection and recover nicely, although the fungus can remain in the bird and reappear during future events of stress. However, when birds are at their weakest - due to youth, old age, or stressed in some other way - they can die quickly and without noticeable symptoms. Noticeable symptoms include gaping (stretching their neck forward and opening their mouth), coughing, sneezing, sniffing, 'chirping', and gasping for air. Sometimes a bird with no noticeable symptoms can be held to your ear to hear crackling, rattling, and gurgling from inside their lungs when they breathe. (Symptoms are more noticeable in waterfowl than in poultry.) The bird can simply suffocate from the fungus in their trachea, or die from the excess fluid created in their lungs as their bodies try to fight off the invaders. A chicken's trachea is a fraction of the size of a waterfowl's, so chickens can expire much quicker and without many symptoms.

Up until recently, there had been no known effective systemic treatment against most types of fungal infections (that was easily obtained). Typical antibiotics have no effect against fungi, are only effective against bacteria, and simply ward off secondary infections while the bird's own body tries to recover.

But there is great news! I have recently had the opportunity to try a relatively new (and EPA approved), form of treatment for upper respiratory fungal infections that is ALSO effective against bacterial and viral infections. It's a stabilized (UNACTIVATED), 2% chlorine dioxide disinfectant called OXINE. (The label shows how to activate it with citric acid - don't.) Oxine is available through Seven Oaks Game Farm, Smith Poultry Supply, and Cutler's Pheasant Supply. The standard treatment is to dilute 6.5 ounces of Oxine in 1 gallon of water. (This provides 1000 ppm of active disinfectant.) Apply using fogging or nebulizing equipment every other day for a week - OR - up to 3 times per day for very severe cases. For those with very small flocks, use the same dilution and apply through the finest mist setting on a bottle with a trigger sprayer. The goal is to get the birds to literally inhale the Oxine mist or fog. Fogging is best. I use the hand-held Fogmaster Tri-Jet Fogger. You can purchase one on the Internet at www.fogmaster.com. Dyna-Fog also has a nice product at www.dynafog.com.

Once the birds inhale Oxine, it works as a disinfectant to kill the growing fungus in the trachea and lungs by direct contact. Once killed, the fungus is gone forever from the bird's system and eliminates any further irritation from the infection. The only time Oxine won't work is if it's administered after the bird's own defenses have 'walled off' the fungus (put a coating over it to isolate it from the healthy cells). If this happens, the Oxine cannot make direct contact with the fungus, and therefore, cannot kill it. It is then up to the bird's own defenses to recover.

At prescribed dilutions, Oxine is so safe that you could use it as a mouthwash! Oxine is commonly used to treat human and animal drinking water and is 'cutting-edge' treatment in the egg producing and commercial poultry industry. Those that are aware of Oxine, fog their flocks once a week as part of their preventative routine. (Oxine has also been proven to virtually eliminate avian influenza from a select group of turkey houses in the upper Midwest.)

Oxine disinfects better than chlorine bleach and kills all known bacteria, molds, spores, and viruses. It will even kill the airborne mold spores as you fog. It also has a residual disinfecting effect when you fog the entire coop or pen in addition to the birds, and it makes a good egg sanitizer. (Getting the fog into the birds' drinking water or feed while fogging is nothing to worry about, and is probably beneficial.)

Molds, mold spores, and fungus play a key role in bird loss. But most breeders have come to expect a certain number of unexplained losses among their youngsters. This is especially true among waterfowl breeders. You know the old saying 'don't count your chickens before they've hatched'? Well, I like to add to that 'don't count your ducklings until they're 2 weeks old'. If there's going to be a serious developmental problem within the waterfowl, it usually shows itself within 2 weeks in the brooder. You shouldn't have losses after 2 weeks that are unexplainable. If you do, you've probably got an upper respiratory fungal infection.