

Timely Euthanasia of Compromised Chicks/Poults

Poultry farmers are committed to producing high quality, safe and affordable food while ensuring high welfare and health for their flocks.

Despite the quality procedures and diligence at the hatcheries and in early brooding in the barn, there will always be a small proportion of chicks/poults that are unable to thrive. These chicks/poults can act as reservoirs of bacterial and viral infections.

One of the most effective tools available to the farmer is the early culling of unthrifty, ill or injured chicks/poults. The greatest positive impact is achieved when culling is performed immediately after those chicks/poults are identified.

In many cases, an effective culling program can improve animal welfare, food safety and minimize or replace the need for antibiotic therapy. Reduced use of antibiotics may benefit flock health and can minimize the risk of antimicrobial resistance, which is a priority for agriculture.

It may be necessary to euthanize chicks/poults for a variety of reasons, all of which impact the health, welfare and productivity of a flock. The following is a guide to identify compromised birds in the first 10 days of life.



Starve Outs / Unthrifty Chicks/Poults

Poult



healthy vs unthrifty

Chick



For 2-3 days after hatch chicks/poults can meet all their nutritional needs by absorbing the nutrients from their yolk. To grow, thrive and successfully compete, chicks/poults must transition to feed and water supplied in the barn within this 2-3 day period. Failure to transition will result in a weak bird which is not likely to recover. These birds should be euthanized.

Yolk Sac / Navel Infection (Mushy Chicks/Poults)

Chick



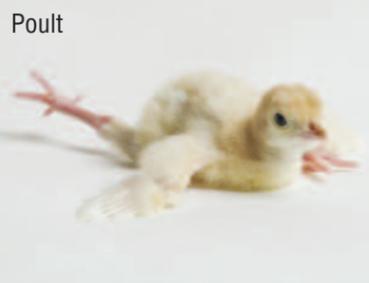
Chick



As chicks/poults internalize the yolk from the egg, the navel is left as the last point where the body wall seals off. If the yolk is contaminated before internalization, or if bacteria enter the chick/poult through the navel before it closes, the yolk acts as a nutrient source for bacteria, resulting in an overwhelming infection. Antibiotic treatment often keeps chicks alive but fails to resolve the original infection. Loss will occur when treatment is removed. Euthanasia will reduce suffering and limit the amount of bacteria shed into the environment.

Injury

Poult



Chick



Chicks/poults may be injured through the hatching, sorting, transportation and brooding processes. Injuries can result in wounds and lameness, which are painful to the chick/poult. Due to resulting infections and the inability to compete for feed and water, injured chicks/poults should be euthanized immediately.

Disease

Chick



Chick



Diseased chicks/poults are more susceptible to other disease challenges which will have detrimental effects later in the flock. Euthanizing these chicks/poults early will reduce the possible spread of disease to healthy birds.

Deformed, Abnormal Chicks/Poults

Chick



Chick



Chicks/poults that are improperly formed, abnormal or unable to perform normal activities such as walking, feeding and drinking should be euthanized. These chicks/poults will not compete well, will become small and weak and their welfare will suffer if they are not culled.

If you are concerned, contact your veterinarian.