

Bumblefoot is an infection of the foot in birds, which enters through damage to the skin.

You may see varying signs from red swelling all the way to crippling lameness. You may notice black scabs on the bottom of your bird's foot, trapping the infection underneath and causing the tissue to die around the site.

Antibiotics are required early to fight the infection, and should be kept on dry, soft bedding during recovery.



Stages

Bumblefoot progresses through four stages:

1. The foot simply looks red and swollen, but tissue is still soft and the bird may or may not show obvious signs of pain.
2. Black scabs are obvious on the most weight bearing aspects of the foot. A dead core of tissue forms beneath the scab. Your bird will likely show moderate pain at this stage.
3. The infection spreads to the bone and surrounding soft tissues, causing severe lameness, immobility and weight loss.
4. Crippling deformity of the feet and legs

Depending on the stage of the disease, your bird may require foot baths, simple surgical removal of the dead tissue, antibiotics and pain relief, and bandaging. If severely progressed, euthanasia may be recommended. Often by the time birds show moderate-severe pain, they require surgery under sedation to fully remove the hardened pus further up in the foot.

NOTE PERFORMING SURGERY ON AN ANIMAL AT HOME IS ILLEGAL.

A GUIDE TO CHICKENS: BumbleFoot

Causes and prevention

Heavier breeds and males are more susceptible, however the cause of bumblefoot may be multifactorial, and require environmental modification. Here are some common causes and easy ways you can reduce the risk:

- Make sure roosts are not too high; this can cause excessive weight on the feet when they hit the ground. Perches should be 40-50cm high.
- Use smooth roosts; rough perches may cause splinter injuries
- Ensure the ground beneath roosts is not hard, rocky or rough, for a gentle landing
- Be conservative when nail trimming to avoid wounds

- Ensure dry bedding; walking around on wet, soiled bedding for long periods can cause ulceration and poor skin health
- Regularly check the area for sharp objects or rocky ground that can cause damage
- Perform regular checks of your chickens' feet to ensure early identification of infection

There are other foot diseases that can look like bumblefoot. Other internal disease such as digestive system upset, infection or other recurrent illness can also predispose to bumblefoot.

When to call vet

- Book in with a vet for a full check-up, or for a flock health consult at your property.
- If concerned or swelling / damage to feet etc is evident.

