

Blackhead in Turkeys

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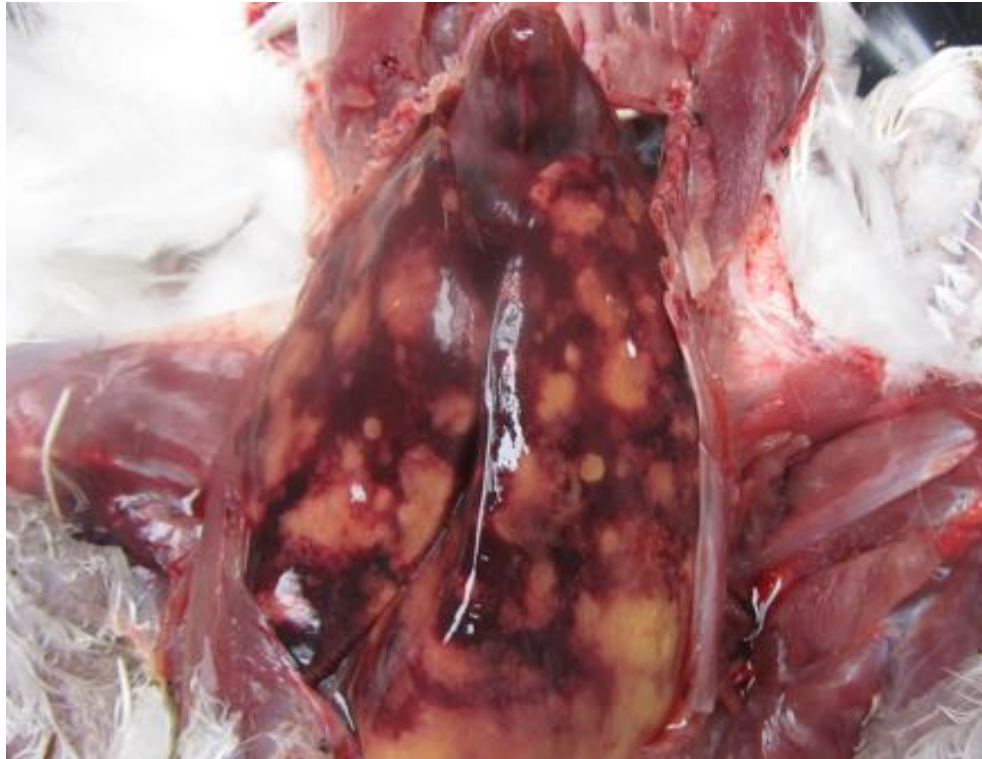


Fig. 1. If you lose birds, put on some gloves and perform a quick necropsy by opening up the abdomen of the bird. This photo shows the lower abdomen of a dead turkey, which has been opened up to show the entrails. The large, spotted organ in the center is the liver, which should be smaller, and uniformly dark red. The large nodules suggest that this animal has histomoniasis, or blackhead disease.

Blackhead in turkeys is a common protozoal parasite in Maine. Turkeys can get it when they eat worms that have picked up the parasite from other birds, such as chickens. Turkeys can also acquire the protozoan directly from the fecal material of other infected turkeys. The commonly used drugs for killing this parasite are no longer available, so prevention is the best plan.

However, some alternative treatments may be available, though effectiveness is not proven. **Raising turkeys on something other than dirt is a good plan**, and turkeys should never be raised along with chickens, or where chickens have been kept.

More information is available online at:

<http://www.thepoultrysite.com/articles/1285/control-of-blackhead-disease>