

CHICKEN LICE

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ENTOMOLOGY RESEARCH DIVISION
Agricultural Research Service

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Leaflet 366, "Poultry Lice: How To Control Them."

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How To Control Them

Leaflet No. 474

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

CHICKEN LICE

How To Control Them

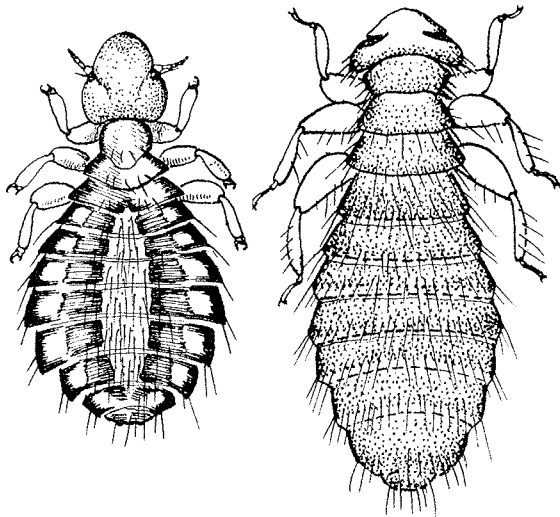
Lice irritate chickens, and sometimes kill them. They cause the birds to lose weight. Heavy infestations of lice may reduce egg production as much as 10 to 20 percent.

You can control chicken lice by applying insecticide to the birds, and to the interiors of chicken-houses.

KINDS OF LICE

Several species of biting (as distinguished from bloodsucking) lice attack chickens. They are:

Common name	Scientific name
Body louse	<i>Eomenacanthus stramineus</i>
Head louse	<i>Cuclotogaster heterographus</i>
Shaft louse	<i>Menopon gallinae</i>
Wing louse	<i>Lipeurus caponis</i>
Fluff louse	<i>Goniocotes hologaster</i>
Large chicken louse	<i>G. gigas</i>
Brown chicken louse	<i>Goniodes dissimilis</i>



Head louse.

Body louse.

The body louse and the head louse are the most common species. The head louse is especially injurious to young birds, and is more difficult to control.

DEVELOPMENT

Female lice lay their eggs on a chicken's feathers. A gluey substance holds the eggs in place. They hatch in a few days to 2 weeks.

A newly hatched louse is transparent. As it grows, it molts (sheds its skin) several times, and color comes to its body. It is full grown 2 weeks after hatching.

Adult lice vary in shape and size, according to species. They feed on parts of the feathers and on scales of the skin.

CONTROL

Inspect your flock regularly. Apply an insecticide if the birds are infested with lice.

Several insecticides are very effective for delousing chickens. Some can be applied as roost paints; others as sprays, dusts, or dips.

Treating the Birds

When spraying or dusting chickens on wire, apply the insecticide both over the backs and from beneath to insure effective penetration and coverage. Spraying or dusting should be done at night when the birds are quiet.

Spraying

Spray the chickens either individually or in groups. Use a garden-type sprayer or power sprayer.

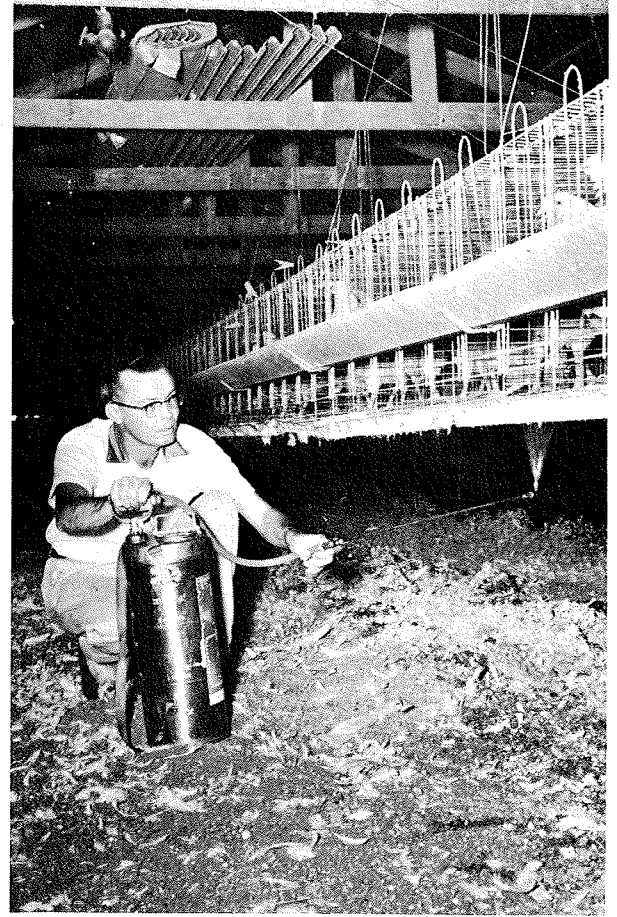
Use a spray containing 0.5 percent of malathion. To prepare the spray, purchase a malathion emulsifiable concentrate or wettable powder and mix it with water. Directions on the container will tell you how to attain the 0.5-percent strength.



PN-794
Parting a chicken's feathers
to find lice.



PN-796
Dusting
the birds.



PN-795
Spraying
the birds.



One gallon of spray should be enough to treat about 100 chickens.

Dusting

Recommended dusts, and their strengths, are malathion (4 or 5 percent) and rotenone (1 percent). Dusts are ready to use when purchased.

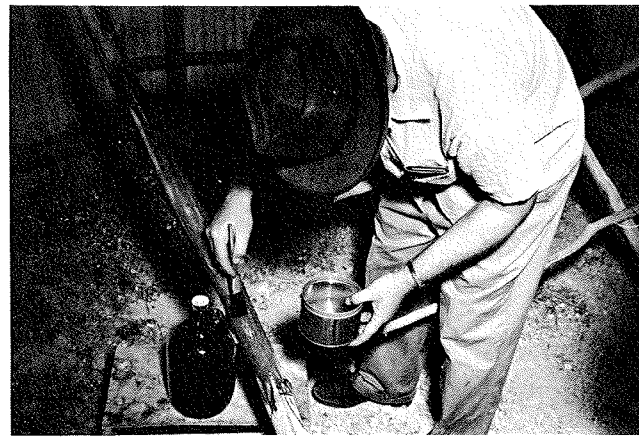
You can apply one of these dusts with a shaker can when dusting birds individually. Shake dust into the feathers of each bird until the dust reaches the skin.

Use a plunger- or rotary-type hand duster to dust malathion or rotenone on the entire flock. One pound of dust should treat 100 chickens.



Spraying
interior of
chickenhouse.

PN-797



Painting
the roosts. PN-798

Dipping

Prepare a dip by mixing 1 ounce of sodium fluoride or sodium fluosilicate in each gallon of warm water.

Treat each bird separately, as follows:

1. Hold wings over its back, using one hand.
2. Immerse the bird, leaving its head out of the dip.
3. Ruffle the feathers with your free hand, allowing insecticide to reach the skin.
4. Duck the head once or twice.
5. Remove bird from the dip, allowing the excess dip to drain off. Keep each bird in the dip 20 to 30 seconds.

Insecticides are poisonous to people and to animals; handle them with care. If you get insecticide on your skin, wash it off immediately with soap and water. If you spill it on your clothes, remove them at once and launder them. Don't spray or dust near feed or water troughs. Don't use insecticides in strengths greater than those recommended.

Treating Roosts and Chickenhouses

You can either spray or paint insecticide on roosts and other parts of the chickenhouse.

Spraying

Use an oil solution or water emulsion containing 1 percent of malathion. Mix according to directions on the insecticide containers.

Apply sprays with a small power sprayer or a garden-type compressed-air sprayer. Spray thoroughly on roosts, nests, and other parts of the chickenhouse.

Painting

Prepare a painting solution by mixing insecticide with either kerosene, diesel oil, or water. Use a mixture containing 3 percent of malathion. Follow directions on the insecticide container.

Apply with a brush to roosts and other interior parts of the chickenhouse. One pint of the mixture should cover about 150 feet of roost.

A nicotine sulfate solution containing 40 percent of nicotine is also recommended for painting roosts. Do not use nicotine sulfate on other areas of the chickenhouse, or on the birds.