



Discharge associated with coryza, photo courtesy of Dr. Sherrill Davison.

Coryza

By Lacey Hughett

The bacterium causing coryza can survive in areas with little oxygen available, such as water or feces. This bacterium lives in chronically ill chickens or chickens that appear healthy but are carriers of the disease due to previously encountering it.

Early treatment is key to flock health. Immediately isolate any bird presenting coryza symptoms, and closely monitor the rest of the flock. Speak to a veterinarian prior to administering any medications. Not only can coryza be misdiagnosed, but the needless overuse of antibiotics can lead to antibiotic-resistant superbugs.

Those at risk for contracting coryza are very stressed, older, weak, or birds with weakened immune systems. Humans can still eat the meat or eggs from infected birds without fear of contracting the disease.

If your flock has coryza, tell your chicken-owning friends. Do not sell birds from your property unless you cull your current flock, sanitize, and start with new stock. For backyard flocks that are pets, the disease is manageable. Contracting coryza does *not* mean you need to cull your flock unless you intend to sell birds in the future.

What is it? An upper respiratory infection.

Causative agent: A bacterium called *Avibacterium paragallinarum*.

Disease onset: 2-3 days, symptoms begin.

Disease duration: 2-3 weeks or longer depending on severity and if other disease agents are present, such as other bacteria or viruses.

Morbidity: Can be as high as 50% and is highly contagious.

Mortality: Can be as high as 30%. Birds are more susceptible when already fighting off another illness. Similarly, birds with coryza are more likely to acquire secondary infections. Mortality rates due to secondary infections are higher than in coryza alone.

Transmission: Direct contact, airborne droplets, or from contaminated drinking water, feed, or bedding. A recovered bird will continue to shed bacteria for life despite remaining asymptomatic.

Avoiding coryza: Can be carried by wild birds, so cover chicken runs with netting to reduce the interactions. Quarantine new birds and do not share equipment. Use dedicated shoes for entering coops.

Signs: Malodorous eye and nose discharge, facial swelling, sneezing, labored breathing, loss of appetite, diarrhea, loss of egg production, and lethargy.

Diagnosis: The *A. paragallinarum* bacterium that can only be diagnosed positively via laboratory tests after a veterinarian takes a sample from a sick bird.

Treatment: Antibiotics. In the U.S., antibiotics must be prescribed by a veterinarian who already has a relationship with the client.

All information vetted for accuracy by Dr. Sherrill Davison, Poultry Specialist at University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine.