



WHAT IS ERYSIPELAS AND ARE MY HENS AT RISK?

Erysipelas is a common disease of pigs, sheep and turkeys and less commonly chickens, and is caused by the bacterium *Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae*.

The disease also has some zoonotic considerations. Some free range and barn systems in Australia have had Erysipelas. In affected flocks the most notable signs are depressed birds and an increase in mortality.

Egg production can be affected. The autopsy signs are of general septicaemia (often observed as haemorrhages spread throughout the carcass).

The Risks:

The affected flocks are generally those with serious rodent control issues or those which are in locations associated with previous turkey or pig flocks.



Image: Signs of Erysipelas (Scolexia)

The organism may gain entrance through breaks in the skin, or via the mucous membranes, via ingestion of contaminated foodstuffs and possibly by mechanical transmission via insects.

Control:

Control is currently undertaken using the Erysipelas vaccines registered for use in sheep and pigs. Two doses, given at 8 and 12 weeks of age have been shown to be effective on farm.

Research:

Scolexia is undertaking research to establish the optimum dose, prove the safety of the vaccine in chickens, and monitor the duration of the immune response in order to provide data to the APVMA to enable a vaccine to be registered for use in chickens.

This research is being funded by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture through Australian Eggs.

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