



Dear Youth Members,

One of the hardest things for most of us to learn is that every time we walk in a poultry barn, coop or just on a lot where poultry runs we pick up different bacteria and perhaps viruses on the soles of our shoes, on our clothes and if we handle birds on our hands. People are always amazed when they purchase new birds, get them home, toss them in a pen or cage and walk away that a few weeks later that particular bird or some of their own in that pen start getting sick and sometimes die. Many times this is not the fault of the breeder or friend that you got the bird from, they didn't sell you a sick bird or cheat you. It's the fact that every time you bring in new stock you have a chance of introducing your chickens to a different strain of bacteria or virus than has been in your barn before or perhaps the bacteria and virus that is dormant in your barn will make the new bird sick when he's been exposed. This can also happen when you take your birds to a poultry show. They are exposed to chickens that are from a whole new environment and sometimes they pick up a cold or other problems from those birds. This can happen when the feathers get blown into the cage next door, the dander flies in the air, a flea or lice move from cage to cage, etc.. This is not to say, by any means, these problems are going to happen every time you visit another fancier's home or show you birds at a show. But it can happen and has happened. If you keep your birds clean, wormed and as free of lice, mites and fleas as possible they will be healthy enough to shun exposure. If your birds are tired and weak from struggling with these blood sucking parasites they will naturally not be able to fight off a virus and bacteria quite so easily.

On the following pages you will be introduced to the most common diseases that we contend with in the poultry fancy. We will give you the most common symptoms and as you will see many are the same, we will introduce you to the medications that many of us use and that have been recommended and many that experienced poultry people have discovered work the best in their flocks. Like any medicine or medical practice, even with humans, some of the medications work better on one bird more so than on the next.

Example: if you have a sore throat you might go to your doctor, he puts you on penicillin and in 3-4 days you are not any better, you call him and he changes your medication to another and it works well. The same can happen with your chickens. Many times it is by trial and error that we learn what is best for our birds.

When you need help from a vet, an experienced breeder or wherever you might purchase your medications, make sure you watch and look over your bird carefully so you can describe the symptoms to the best of your ability. So many diseases have the same symptoms it can be a problem of diagnosing.

Be prepared as you work your way through the higher levels of the youth program because I'm sure some of these will be included in your test.