

Sandhill Veterinary Services

Veterinary Care for Game Birds, Poultry and Pigeons



NEWSLETTER – GROUSE CLIENTS

AUTUMN 2014

REVIEW OF SUBMISSIONS SUMMER 2014

In early June we began seeing young grouse from a number of moors with a similar history of broods of chicks containing one or two chicks that were noticeably smaller than the others and these poor chicks appeared not able to fly. These submissions continued into July and August.

The clinical picture was one of a common history of weak birds on moors which are not physically connected. The young birds submitted showed a variety of clinical conditions on examination suggesting a possible nutritional problem. This was believed to be either due to the hen birds being short of nutrients with the later eggs producing chicks that are less viable or due to a problem in the chick nutrition with the weaker chicks not competing with their stronger companions.

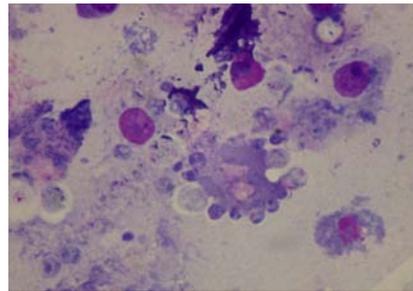
It was suggested by one keeper that it may be due to a late frost that damaged the growing shoots of the heather on the lower areas of the moors as it had been observed that the young birds at higher altitudes are not suffering from these problems and this explanation would fit with our conclusion that the overall problem was of a nutritional origin.

A variety of clinical conditions were seen in the young birds examined.

A number of young birds with Cryptosporidiosis were seen and the condition was confirmed by staining smears of the conjunctival discharges.

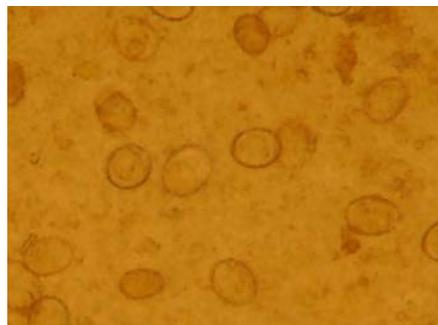


Grouse chick with Cryptosporidiosis.



Stained smear showing Cryptosporidiosis.

A number of young birds with high levels of coccidiosis were seen and in these birds the levels were believed to be clinically significant. Natural immunity to coccidiosis appears to occur in both pheasants and partridges by fourteen weeks of age so clinical disease due to coccidiosis is unlikely in older birds unless they are suffering from some other condition that is adversely affecting the immune system.



Coccidial oocysts seen under the microscope.

We had one case of a chick with high levels of coccidial oocysts that also had a significant *Trichostrongylus* worm burden but otherwise, early in the season, *Trichostrongylus* worm levels were generally low. Later in the season we saw more variety in worm levels and on some moors, whereas the average worm count looked acceptable, there was a large variation in results from individual birds with a significant percentage of the birds tested having very high counts.

One unusual case of a weak chick examined showed it to have severe enteritis with high levels of an unidentified motile protozoa present but the clinical significance of the protozoa was uncertain.

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In August we had one young grouse with avian pox lesions. We also saw the disease in a young bird last year which suggests that it is a disease that may be present as an occasional finding and one that may be confused with Cryptosporidiosis. The young bird with pox also had a heavy louse infestation.



Grouse head with pox lesions.



Louse eggs on grouse feathers

TRICHOSTRONGYLUS WORM COUNTS AUTUMN 2014

Trichostrongylus worm counts this autumn have given very variable results. Many moors have given very low levels suggesting that worming is not desirable at present whilst others have given results that fall into the 'Action Advised' level which is an average of 650 –2000 worms per bird in young birds and 2000 –5000 worms per bird in old birds.

One noticeable feature on some moors was that although the average worm count result was acceptable the individual birds were giving either very low or very high counts suggesting that if the moor was not treated then a significant percentage of birds would be likely to show the clinical effects of having the worms present. On these moors worming of the birds has been advised.



Microscopic view of Trichostrongylus worms

HIGH STRENGTH GRIT 2014 / 2015

A limited amount of High Strength Grit is still available this season in 16kg packs with each pack sufficient to treat 1000 acres of moor land.

We have again been able to maintain the price of the High Strength Grit at the same level as last year: £400 + VAT per 16kg pack.

Unless we get significant additional orders then no further High Strength Grit will be available once the present supplies have been sold.

If worm burdens are high then the use of High Strength Grit is indicated as low strength grit may not give the worm control required. It can be used over winter and should be removed by mid-March.

All grit must be removed at least 28 days before shooting.

If you wish to place an order for High Strength Grit please contact the practice on 01845 578710 or e-mail your order to rtb@sandhillvet.co.uk.

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