

Aortic Ruptures

Aortic aneurysm, dissecting aneurysm or blow outs

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Species

Aortic rupture has been reported in ratites (mainly emu and ostrich but also in rhea) and fast growing strains of commercial turkeys.

Status in Canada

This disease is not common but occasionally seen as a cause of unexpected "sudden death" in apparently healthy birds. In turkeys it occurs more in male birds generally when they are around 16-24 weeks of age.

Etiology

Aneurysms are a weakening of blood vessel walls that may rupture suddenly resulting in massive internal bleeding and death. The aorta is the main artery that leaves the heart and carries blood to the body. Aortic aneurysms generally occur just anterior to the point where the main arteries to the leg branch off but sometimes other vessels like coronary arteries are involved.

The cause of aortic aneurysms is not known but copper deficiency has been suggested as a contributing factor in ratites. Growing turkeys normally have high blood pressure compared to other birds and high protein and high fat diets and pushing fast growth may play a contributory role to the development of vessel abnormalities.

The Disease

There are no clinical signs in birds with aneurysms. They die suddenly or are found dead. The carcass may appear pale due to the massive bleed out and large amounts of clotted blood is present near the location where the vessel has ruptured. On careful inspection the tear in the vessel can be located.

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Blow out (ruptured aorta) in an ostrich.

Note the extensive blood clot around the base of the heart.

Prevention & treatment

There is no treatment for aortic rupture. Good nutrition with adequate copper and trace mineral levels and not pushing growth rates may help reduce the risk of this condition.



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