

Fading Ostrich Syndrome

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Species

“Fading ostrich syndrome” is a disease of ostrich chicks under 6 months of age. This disease is not common but is considered an important condition in the commercial ostrich industry.

Etiology

The cause of this syndrome is not understood, but it is likely to be multifactorial. Relevant aspects are thought to be weak chicks resulting from problems in incubation or hatching, husbandry-related stress, particularly mixing of birds and changes in husbandry, failure or delay in yolk sac absorption, and reluctance to feed. The role of infectious agents is not understood, and although a variety of bacteria and viruses have been isolated from chicks showing a failure to thrive their importance likely varies from farm to farm. In situations where infectious organisms are important in the syndrome there is evidence there may be spread between groups of birds.

The Disease

Affected ostrich chicks eat poorly, appear stunted and have reduced growth rates, and eventually waste away and die. There are no specific clinical diagnostic methods. At necropsy birds generally appear poorly fleshed but there may be no specific abnormalities noted.

Prevention & Treatment

There is no specific treatment for affected chicks. Optimizing husbandry to reduce stress and maintaining good biosecurity to prevent the spread of bacterial and viral organisms between groups of chicks and different age groups may reduce the prevalence of this problem in a flock. Dead chicks should be necropsied to determine if infectious agents are involved and if so, specific antibiotics or other treatments may be recommended to help reduce mortality.



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