

# RED MITE



## The Signs of Red Mite

- \* Grey to red mites up to 0.7mm
- \* Infestations around perch ends and in cracks
  - \* Anaemia and death
  - \* Loss of condition
  - \* A pale comb and wattles
- \* Drop in egg production/birds stop laying
  - \* Spots of blood on eggs
- \* Birds reluctant to go into the house at night

## What are Red Mite

Red mite are hard to spot until you are infested with them. Check the ends and undersides of the hens perches for a grey ash type dust. If you can remove your perches they will be much easier to spot. Before feeding they are white, after feeding are blood red and then grey/black as they digest the blood. They come out at night so are hard to find during the day.

## The Life Cycle of Red Mite

- A blood feed takes 1 to 2 hours.
- After feeding a female red mite crawls into a crack or crevice to mate and lay eggs.
- During mild weather, eggs hatch and the larvae emerge in 2 or 3 days.
- 24 hours later, larvae change into 8 legged protonymphs.
- The protonymphs change into deutonymphs 24 to 36 hours later.
- They start to feed and become adult red mites. The females start to lay eggs again and the cycle is repeated.
- The complete cycle takes about 7 days to complete.

## Controlling Red Mite

There is no single, easy cure for treating red mite and may take several attempts to remove them, it is usually impossible to eradicate them if you have a felt roof. There are many products & methods for treating red mite, some of the most popular are:

**Creosote** - Undoubtedly the only cure but genuine creosote is not generally available, if you are able to track some down soak the whole house in creosote inside and out. The hens will have to be re-housed for a week or two until the fumes fade. Quite good results can be achieved with the creosote alternative (often called creocote and available from DIY stores), but it is variable and the hens will still need re-housing for a few days.

**Combination of red mite products** - Ideally soak the whole house with Smite/Poultry Shield or similar. This will kill any mites it touches but has no residual effect - once it is dry it stops working. When the product is dry coat the inside of the house with a diatomaceous earth product which will then kill any mites missed by the first treatment. Repeat this at least weekly until the mites are under control.

**Blow torches/Steamers** - Used before red mite treatments this can have a good effect in reducing the numbers you need to treat.

**Treat the birds with Frontline or Ivermectin.** Whilst not licensed for use on poultry in the UK, vets often prescribe one or other under their 'clinical judgement' for lice/mite control. Whilst this will eradicate mites that bite your chickens for some time, they will not kill all of the mites since it is only the adults that bite, so always use in conjunction with other treatments.

**A dust bath** sprinkled with diatomaceous earth/louse powder will help the hen relieve and treat herself.

**Ardap** spray is a general insecticide that kill red mite on contact. It can be used on any housing but we find it ideal to use on plastic housing for instant results.

**Diatomaceous powder** - Most louse powders have this as their staple ingredient. Diatomaceous powder is the micro skeletons of fossilized remains of deceased diatoms which are a type of algae found in water, very safe to use and be used in organic farms. If dusted around the perches and edges of the house it can drastically reduce numbers of red mite. It has microscopically sharp edges and it works by piercing the outer waxy coating of the mite which will dry up/desiccate the mite. There is no chemical toxicity since diatom controls insect by physical means rather than chemical.