

Conditions for Rejection of Poultry at Post Mortem

Abnormal Colour/Fevered (septicaemia/toxaemia)

Post Mortem Disposition



Figure 1: The carcass on the left is normal compared to the dehydrated carcass on the right - note that when the skin is twisted it does not return to its normal position. The carcass on the right is unfit and should be recorded as unfit under abnormal colour.



Figure 3: The carcass on the left is normal compared to an emaciated, abnormally coloured carcass on the right. The carcass on the right should be rejected as unfit and recorded as emaciation.



Figure 2: These carcasses are dark red and normally sized and should be rejected as unfit and recorded as abnormally coloured.



Figure 4: This poorly bled bird should be rejected as unfit and recorded as dead other than slaughter.



Figure 5: Pink colour on the skin of this bird is only due to extremes of temperature at the time of kill. This bird should be recorded as fit.

FSS Responsibilities

Post-mortem Disposition

Note: Many birds can have more than one condition. Carcasses should only be recorded as abnormally coloured if no other conditions are noted.

Total rejection of carcass and offal if septicaemic (recorded as abnormally coloured), emaciated, poorly bled, has ascites or is truly abnormally coloured after the above conditions have been ruled out.

If temperature related as in Fig. 5 it should be passed as fit for human consumption.

Recording of the condition

The condition must be recorded on the "Abnormal colour/fevered" entry on the Post Mortem Inspection section of OWS.

Further Information

Causes

There are a number of potential causes of abnormally coloured birds; septicaemia (blood poisoning), ascites, dehydration, uncut birds, dark firm dry carcasses and birds that were too hot or too cool at the time of death.

Remarks

In many cases of septicaemia (blood poisoning caused by bacteria or their toxins entering the birds' blood stream) the bird will be smaller than normal and the abnormal colour will be a dark red colour with both the skin and the muscle affected – such birds are unfit for human consumption and should be totally rejected. These birds if small should be recorded as emaciated and if normally sized should be recorded as abnormally coloured. Some abnormally coloured birds will have ascites leading to poor bleeding. Such birds should be recorded as having ascites. Dehydrated birds will be abnormally coloured and when the skin is cut the underlying muscle is tacky. Such birds are unfit for human consumption and should be rejected as abnormally coloured. Uncut birds/birds that have been poorly bled should again be recorded and rejected as such.

What is the data on rejects used for?

It is important that abnormally coloured birds are recorded correctly as there are many potential causes. If the issue is septicaemia then the farmer needs to look at the disease challenge on the farm, if the issue is ascites then the farmer needs to look at hatchery environmental conditions, ventilation on farm and potential respiratory pathogens, if the issue is extreme temperatures then transport/lairage conditions should be checked.

Comments from Inspection Teams

Special attention should be paid during extreme cold weather as a number of carcasses may present a bright reddish/pink colour on the carcasses' surface. High incidence of such abnormal coloured birds is indicative of a welfare issue on the farm, during transport or at the slaughterhouse, therefore action should be taken accordingly.

A good way to differentiate it from abnormal colour/fevered condition is by twisting the breast skin to check elasticity. Due to dehydration the skin would remain twisted in abnormal colour/fevered carcasses and would not spring back to the original shape.

Please note that unless severely affected, bright reddish/pink coloured carcasses will not normally render the carcass as unfit for human consumption. However, in those instances in which it does, it should be recorded under “Other Farm” condition.

Acknowledgements to:

Ramon Romero (LV) and Marta Borrego (OV) and British Veterinary Poultry Association (BVPA) for the development of this condition card.

Pictures: Christian Barr (ITL); Ana Perez (OV); Adrian Kacmar (OV); Carla Novau (OV) and Marta Borrego (OV) and BVPA.