

# Cataracts in Two Unrelated Chicken Flocks

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## Cataracts

- Opacification of Ocular lens.
- Classified by location:
  - nuclear-center of lens.
  - cortical-outer edge of lens.
  - subcapsular-between fibrous capsule and lens epithelium.
- Classified by etiology:
  - age.
  - bacterial.
  - fungal.
  - nutritional deficiencies.
  - viral.
- Histological examination is important to identifying cause.
- Uncommon in chickens.



Normal eye of laying hen



Normal Eye x20



Cataract x20



Cataract with Iritis x20

## Case I Laying Hens



Cataracts in Laying Hens

- Three laying houses are present on the farm.
- Cataracts were first reported at 45 wks of age; approx. 10% of flock affected.
- Bilateral lesions were seen in all affected chickens.
- Representative affected and non-affected birds were taken for necropsy.

## Case II Broiler Chickens



Cataracts in Broiler Chickens

- The bird population on the farm was originally 24,600 birds; 20% losses.
- Cataracts first reported in chickens between 12 and 18 weeks of age.
- Both unilateral and bilateral lesions were observed
- Representative affected birds were taken for necropsy.

## Conclusion

- Cataracts were identified in two farms that were unrelated to one another.
- The leading cause of cataracts in chickens is avian encephalomyelitis (AE), which birds on both farms were vaccinated against.
- The efficacy of the vaccine is unknown at this time.
- Representative samples of the eye, brain, and lumbar spinal cord were taken for histopathology.
- Serum Samples were sent off for AE antibody testing.
- Virus isolation is being done on aqueous humor.
- Results of diagnostic testing may provide information about the cause of the cataracts.