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Introduction

There are various tumours that exist in poultry for which the cause is unknown. Tumours with known causes such as Marek's disease and lymphoid leucosis have been considered elsewhere in Poultryhealth BYTES.

The prevalence of tumours in poultry is species, breed, age and sex dependent and is influenced by hormones, viruses and chemicals.

Surveys of birds at processing can be useful but it should be remembered that the sample surveyed comes from a very specific group of birds, albeit a large number, in terms of sex, species, breed and age.

None of the tumours have a public health significance.

Female reproductive tract tumours

Various types of ovarian tumours occur. Adenocarcinomas are derived from the surface mesothelium of the ovary and start as small white nodules on the ovary's surface which then coalesce into a cauliflower like mass with secondary tumours occurring elsewhere in the body cavity (transcoelomic metastases).

Several other types of reproductive tract tumours occur including granulosa-theca cell tumours which can occur as cysts and these can become quite thick.

Leiomyomas are often seen in the ventral ligament of the oviduct and the wall of the oviduct and can be present in up to 60% of first cycle commercial layers.

Adenocarcinomas of the oviduct are usually found in the upper magnum and can spread to other internal organs such as the liver and spleen. Again this is a tumour which can be quite prevalent in a flock.

Testicular tumours

Sertoli cell tumours are rare in chickens. Seminomas have been seen in chickens and ducks. Interstitial (Leydig) cell tumours are not found in chickens.

Digestive tract tumours

The most common tumour of the upper digestive tract is the squamous cell carcinoma. Multiple oesophageal papilloma are sometimes seen.

Various adenomas and adenocarcinomas of the proventriculus and gizzard occur, as do adenocarcinomas of the intestine, but these need to be differentiated from the metastases of other adenocarcinomas whose primary site is elsewhere in the body.