

Fowl Mites

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Two species of fowl mites, the Northern fowl mite, *Ornithonyssus sylviarum* (Fig. 1), and the chicken mite, *Dermanyssus gallinae*, may attack humans when the right circumstances prevail. Both mites are also known pests of poultry and wild birds. Household infestations can result when chicken roosts or wild bird nests, such as swallows under the eaves, are in close proximity to the home. The bite of the chicken mite can be particularly painful and irritating. These mites are extremely small (.075 mm) and off-white in color. Untrained diagnosticians may confuse them with scavenger mites (Fig. 2). Invariably, however, when household mite infestations are determined (other than spider mites on houseplants) the pest turns out to be one of these fowl mites. Under good magnification, the differences between these mites are fairly evident (see pictures below). Fowl mites appear more "heavy" bodied (Fig. 3) and their legs are clearly stouter than those of scavenger mites. The latter are quite hairy and bear delicate legs by comparison (Fig. 4). Scavenger mites are not known to bite humans but can cause allergy or itch reactions in large numbers.

The management of fowl mites in chicken roosts is addressed in WSU EB0912, *Poultry Pointers*. If they have made their way into the home from wild birds on the home, the obvious first measure for management is to remove the nest and discard it away from the home. Those mites indoors can be dispatched with vigorous cleaning and vacuuming (discard bag afterwards). Supplemental control is available in the use of some household aerosol sprays. Contact a reputable pest management specialist or your county Extension agent for the proper active ingredient that should be listed on the pesticide label.

Follow label directions carefully if pesticides are used.



Fig. 1. Northern fowl mite.
Unknown author.



Fig. 2. Scavenger mite or grain mite.
By K. Grey.

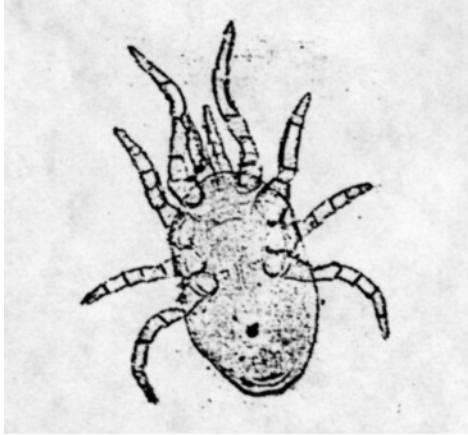


Fig. 3. Drawing of northern fowl mite. Note the stout legs.

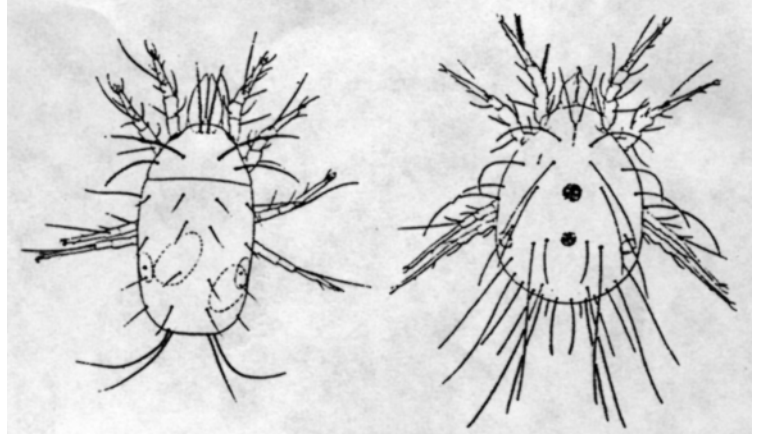


Fig. 4. Drawing of grain mite. Note the delicate legs.