

Acute Aspergillosis in Mallards
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A mallard mortality event involving 80 birds occurred on a hunt club in western Tennessee in mid-November 1995. The hunt club is comprised of approximately 2,000 acres, primarily open water and flooded crops, along the south fork of the Obion River. Other species of ducks reportedly were using the area, but mortality apparently was limited to mallards. Four of the affected mallards were submitted to SCWDS for necropsy, and all had gross lesions characteristic of acute aspergillosis. The most consistent and striking lesion was dark red, firm lungs studded with numerous small (1/16 to 1/8-inch), discrete, yellow nodules. In addition, some birds had similar yellow nodules on the mucosal surface at various locations along the digestive tract. Microscopic examination of tissues confirmed the presence of fungal hyphae typical of aspergillosis.

Aspergillosis is a respiratory infection of birds and mammals caused by fungi of the genus *Aspergillus*, most frequently *A. fumigatus*. Aspergillosis is commonly diagnosed in waterfowl, but usually as scattered, individual cases. Sudden die-offs, such as the one reported here, occur less frequently but previously have been reported in mallards, Canada geese, and other waterfowl species in the United States and Canada. Infection with *Aspergillus* is initiated by inhalation of fungal spores; bird-to-bird transmission does not occur. The source of the fungus in major die-offs usually is accumulation of moldy agricultural products such as waste corn, peanuts, straw, or hay. When a local source can be identified, birds should be denied use of the area. A local source could not be found for the die-off in Tennessee, and additional mortality has not been observed.