



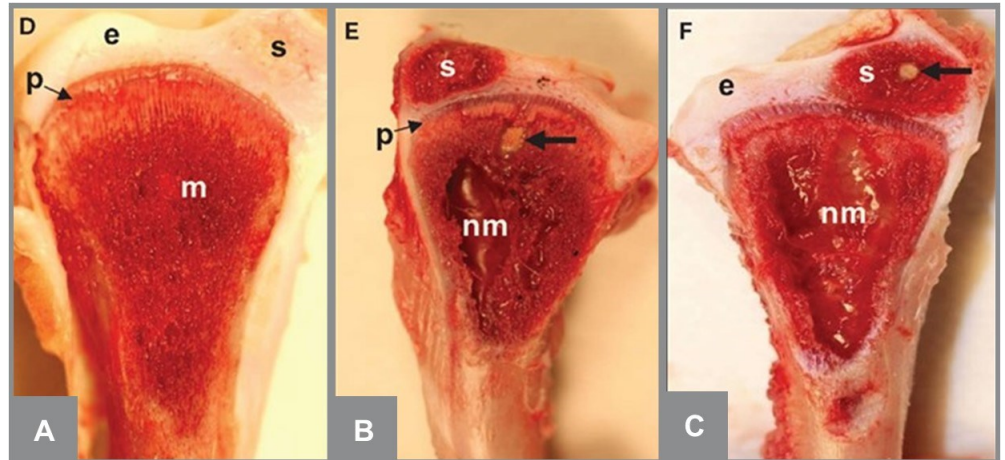
# What is BCO?

*Bacterial Chondronecrosis with Osteomyelitis (BCO) is also called femoral or tibial head necrosis. BCO occurs when bacteria infect the head of the femur or tibia in poultry. BCO is mostly seen with high yielding broiler chickens.*

## What Does BCO Look Like?

- ▶ BCO will look like other leg health issues. Birds may be walking abnormally or even exhibit an inability to walk (lameness).
- ▶ Leg issues from BCO may become noticeable after 14 days of age.
- ▶ In order to confirm the cause of lameness is BCO, a necropsy must be performed post-mortem.

**Normal appearance of the tibial head (A). Bacterial infection has destroyed a portion of the growth plate (B, C). Thick arrows point to bacterial colonies.**



Source: Wideman and Prisby

## How Do You Prevent BCO in Your Flock?

- ▶ Keep all equipment for hatching chicks clean and disinfected.
- ▶ Vaccinate birds for any viral diseases common in your area. Sick birds may be more likely to develop BCO infections.
- ▶ Proper nutrition and adding probiotics can help prevent BCO.

## Why Does BCO Matter?

- ▶ Severe cases of BCO can prevent birds from accessing food and water because they cannot or will not walk.
- ▶ BCO is painful for the bird.
- ▶ BCO can be horizontally transmitted (from bird to bird). This happens when an infected bird exposes another to the bacteria. This may happen at the drinker, and on many other surfaces through out the house.

## Potential Technology to Diagnose BCO

Researchers have used infrared imaging technology as an oninvasive test for BCO. Although the results are promising, more research is needed before this method can be used on-farm.

Link to study <http://dx.doi.org/10.3382/ps/pey538>

**There is no treatment for BCO. Monitoring and prevention are key. A good vaccination program and biosecurity practices may reduce incidences of BCO.**