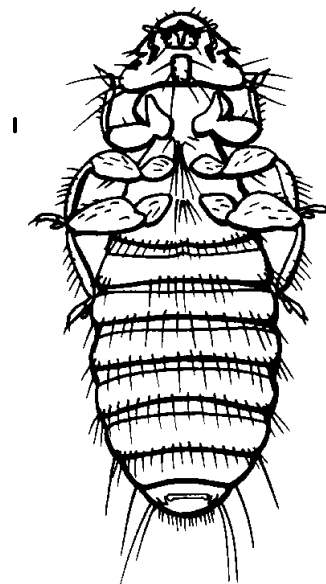


CHICKEN BODY LOUSE Mallophaga: Menoponidae *Menacanthus stramineus*

DESCRIPTION

Chewing lice have chewing mouthparts and the head is wider than the thorax. Most are external parasites on birds and are not permanent pests on humans. Chewing lice feed on hair, feathers, or skin of the host. The chicken body louse is 2 to 3 mm long, yellow, with the body flattened dorso-ventrally. The tarsi terminate in two claws modified for grasping.



(after USDHEW, Public Health Serv.)

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

Poultry infested with this louse show poor weight gain and reduced egg production. Severely infested poultry may die or need to be destroyed. Infestations are usually most severe when birds are confined in large numbers.

DISTRIBUTION AND LIFE HISTORY

Chicken lice are found worldwide wherever the host occurs. Eggs are attached to the base of the feathers. The eggs hatch in four to seven days into tiny nymphs that begin feeding on feathers or bits of skin. Nymphal development is generally completed in about nine days. Adults mate and females begin laying one to four eggs each day for a period of 12 to 14 days. There are several overlapping generations each year.

MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

Proper management and sanitation can help prevent infestations of this pest. Insecticides are probably the most practical and economical method of controlling infestations once they have become established. Flocks should be checked frequently and any chickens that appear weakened or unhealthy should be removed from the flock. See the Pacific Northwest Insect Control Handbook for a list of registered insecticides and specific information on their use.