

50 *poultry* POINTERS



OVERCOMING COMMON PROBLEMS

Keep a small area around the coop clear of snow and ice during the winter, so your chickens won't have to freeze their feet just to stretch their legs.

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

Make sure your chickens have some access to fresh air during the day outside of the coop, especially when temperatures rise.

SURVIVING FOWL WEATHER

Keeping water in its liquid form can pose a challenge when temperatures take an icy dive. Some people paint the waterer black and shine a heat lamp on it. This keeps the water thawed and also provides some warmth for the birds.

BROODER ROOM BASICS

If your chicks are huddled together directly under the heat source, your brooder is probably too cold. You'll need to lower the heat lamp closer to the chicks.

COOP CONSTRUCTION

Before building your coop, install a pad of cement pavers to put the coop on. This prevents any predators from digging underneath.

THE BASICS OF BIOSECURITY

Observe your birds daily for signs of sickness, and be prepared to act if illness or death strikes. Isolate a sick bird from your other chickens immediately.

NEWS & NOTES

If you run out of uses for eggs before your hens have stopped laying them, you can freeze them. To prevent the yolks from turning gummy, add $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt for each cup to be used in general baking or breakfast dishes.

FIRST WEEK SURVIVAL GUIDE

A rigid, plastic kiddie pool filled with dry bedding can be a good temporary first home for up to 25 baby chicks.

HEALTHY EGGS FOR HEALTHY EATING

Choose a consistent time to gather the day's eggs. The longer that eggs sit in the nest box, the more likely they will be walked on or defecated on by your flock.

MARVELOUS MANURE

The compost should be composed of a healthy carbon-to-nitrogen balance of brown material, such as straw or coop bedding, dried leaves or dried grass, and green material, such as chicken manure, green grass clippings and kitchen scraps. Chicken manure is so high in nitrogen, so you may be successful using a one part green to one part brown mixture.

FIRST AID FOR FOWL

If one of your hens is going through a difficult molt, you might consider fencing her in a separate area of the yard, so the other hens don't injure her.

#1

Keep a small area around the coop clear of snow and ice during the winter, so your chickens can stretch their legs without freezing.



SHUTTERSTOCK, JPRICE3, BLESSINGCAPTURED / COVER



#6

Observe your chickens daily for signs of sickness.

#34



ABO PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK

The Good, the Bad and the Meh

In general, garden vegetables that we consider to be healthy for us to eat are also healthy for chickens to eat. But if your chickens are accustomed to commercial feed, then it's best at first to begin offering them garden greens later in the day after they've fulfilled their dietary requirements by eating the commercial mix.

CHILLY CHICKENS

Protect combs and wattles from frostbite by coating them with petroleum jelly or another heavy moisturizer every few days.

COLD WEATHER TIPS

Collect the eggs as often as you can. Chicken eggs are composed of nearly 75% water, so they'll freeze and crack quickly once exposed to the cold air.

RAISING YOUR OWN

To develop and hatch successfully, eggs should be incubated at a temperature between 99 and 102 degrees Fahrenheit and 50 to 65 percent relative humidity.

SEE SAW MAKE CUTS

You'll need more than just chicken wire to keep your flock safe. Invest in a welded, galvanized, 14-gauge wire fence for your run's outer walls.

IT'S TIME TO CLEAN HOUSE

Use a mixture of leaves and pine shavings for the floor area. This mixture also makes great compost when moved out and aged.

MOTHERS KNOW BEST

Some good nesting-box materials to consider include wood shavings, sawdust, shredded paper and grass clippings from a nontreated lawn.

BUILD A BETTER FEEDER

For growing birds too small to reach your newly built feeder, place a block of wood in front of the feeder to serve as a step ladder.

THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES

Old hens can't process nutrients as efficiently as younger birds, and their bodies are depleted of minerals. Offer calcium in oyster shell form, free choice, even if it's supplemented in their feed.

SHOO, FLY!

If possible, keep waterers out of the coop. The use of waterer nipples inside the run is enormously helpful in maintaining a dry chicken yard while offering the flock fresh water and preventing flies from sully the water supply.

PLANTING FOR POULTRY

Leave stems on homegrown grain, and dry them upside down in handful bundles. When winter keeps your hens cooped up, hang bundles high enough that hens have to stand on tiptoes or hop to reach them. This provides healthy exercise that may also improve winter egg-laying.

KEEP YOUR COOL

Chickens generally won't even touch water that registers above 90 degrees, so when the air temperatures are high, it's time for ice cubes or ice blocks in your chickens' water. Vitamins and electrolytes or plain Pedialyte added to the water in extreme heat can help your chickens cope better with the heat.

EGGSTRAORDINARY IDEAS

Eggshells can work wonders in the garden to keep some pests, such as slugs and snails, away from plants.

WHAT THE SHELL?!

When a chick grows to egg-laying maturity, it's time to switch from a grower feed to a layer feed. Layer feed has a higher level of calcium in it than a grower feed.

THIS LITTLE LIGHT

Don't keep an egg out of the incubator (or out from under a broody hen) for more than five minutes. Each time you remove an egg, you expose it to potential harm: the bacteria from your hands, for instance, and especially inconsistent temperatures and humidity.

OFF TO A GOOD START

Young fowl need good traction on the brooder floor, or you will have damaged legs and slipped tendons on the hocks. Wood shaving and chopped straw are good bedding choices.

COMING HOME TO ROOST

In cold climates, round perches put birds' feet at a greater risk of frostbite. In these areas, use a flat, wooden perch that forces birds to spread their feet out so their toes are kept warm by the chickens' breasts.

FOR MAXIMUM WELLBEING

Catnip, pennyroyal and fennel can be used to repel insects. Grow them around your chicken coop or crush and sprinkle them inside.

SELL & SWAP TALK

Examine each chicken carefully before buying it. If the seller doesn't want you to handle a bird, don't be shy about asking him to display it to your specifications.

SALAD SALUTE

Bugs and greens provide the nutrients that make the yolks of backyard hens so nutritious and beautifully orange. Look for ways to make sure your hens are getting enough greens in their diet.

#38



NICK BERSHUTTER/STOCK

The Beauty of a Broody

If you want to hatch chickens with mama hens, you're best off with a broody breed. Silkies are noted for their keen desire to set and to mother chicks. Bantams of the setting breeds are good bets, too.



Feed your chickens more in winter so they can generate body heat to stay warm.

NATURAL REMEDIES

In the event of an attack, bring the injured hen inside somewhere warm and quiet; give it a quick once-over to assess the damage. Call the vet if needed, and then clean the wounds as best as you can with saline solution. If blood is flowing, apply a generous amount of cornstarch directly to the wound to stop the bleeding as quickly as possible.

PREPPING FOR WINTER

Reduce fire hazards in and around the heating source. Use poultry-safe heat lamps with guards, if possible, and on a timer to control the temperature.

THE NEED TO FEED

Grit is an important ingredient in chicks' diets that help them properly digest food. (Chickens don't have teeth, so they seek out tiny stones that grind up food in their gizzards.) Free-ranging birds can find grit in their environment, but for brooder chicks, supplementary grit is mandatory to help them digest their food.

FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

Ensure your birds have adequate places to hide from predators when they range, and lock up your chickens well before dusk to avoid "the killing hour" when predators feed before dark.

WATCHING OUT FOR STRESS

The key to reducing stress in new mothers is the same across species: Support them! Mother hens should be given quiet, safe quarters to sit in their clutches for the three weeks of incubation and for the several weeks after hatching.

THE CASE OF THE MISSING EGGS

Hens require at least 14 hours of light to maintain egg production. To keep the gals laying all year, use artificial lights to augment the natural sunlight when the day length decreases.

EGGS FOR LATER

One way to preserve your hens' bounty is by freezing excess eggs. The simplest way is by scrambling raw eggs in recipe-specific portions, pouring them into plastic freezer containers or freezer-safe canning jars, and popping them into the freezer. They'll keep for about nine months.

UPCYCLING EGGSHHELLS

Sterilized eggshells, crushed or powered, can be star cleaners around the house. Make a cleaning paste by mixing sterilized, finely pulverized shells with a little lemon juice, vinegar or water (plain or soapy). The nontoxic abrasive can be used on pots, pans or wherever you might use a store-bought abrasive cleaner.

BOREDOM-BUSTING SUPER TREATS

Active birds, especially in the winter, are happy birds. Allow birds to keep themselves busy by foraging to keep them from activities like pecking each other.

Incubating and brooding chicks requires special timing and climatic circumstances. There's a reason spring chicks are the cliché: The weather is neither too hot nor too cold to either ship fertile eggs or chicks, and by the time the birds are fully feathered — four to five weeks from hatching — the weather is warm enough for them to be outdoors without a heater.

HAVING PATIENTS

Separating a symptomatic bird will hopefully keep the rest of your flock from also becoming ill. Separation will also prevent your other birds from bullying and attacking the ailing animal, as flock pecking orders can restructure as a result of a weakened member.

GIMME SHELTER!

Housing your chickens with other animals — especially larger livestock — can result in fretful temperatures, accidental injury and even death. Bunking your hens with other birds, such as turkeys, is also not recommended, due to possibility of illnesses such as blackhead disease passing between bird species.

COLD CHICKEN

Chickens need to eat more in winter to generate body heat to stay warm. So during the winter, leave feed out all day, allowing them to eat whenever they like. It's also beneficial to modify their diet slightly to increase the amount of protein and fat they consume.

HAD I ONLY KNOWN!

If you're keeping chickens primarily for eggs or meat, replace the flock every couple of years. If space is limited, decide whether to keep the hens as pets, butcher them for food, take them to be slaughtered or have a source where they can live out the remainder of their non-producing lives.

A SEASON FOR FREEZIN'

Normally, farm-fresh eggs can be left out at room temperature for a few weeks on the kitchen counter and still be fine to eat because the bloom or natural coating on the eggshell keeps out air and bacteria. However, if you collect eggs that are cold to the touch, condensation will probably form on the shells once they start to warm up, which can make the properties of the bloom ineffective, so it's good practice to refrigerate your eggs in the winter.

CHICKEN HEALTH, FROM A TO Z

Birds of different ages need varying amounts of water. The older a bird is, the more water it typically needs. In summer, keep waterers out of direct sun. In winter, take precautionary measures to make sure the waterers don't freeze.

WHEN THE HEAT IS ON

Avoid giving birds dietary additions via treats during hot weather. Otherwise, body temps will increase from calories burned during digestion.

SHOW & TELL

Weeks before a poultry show, train your birds to be accustomed to being caged and handle them a few times each day as a judge would.

FOR A HEALTHY FLOCK

For some breeds and some flocks, a quality feed alone is not enough. Supplement your birds' diets with oyster shells for added calcium and grit for aiding digestion; both are usually available wherever other chicken-keeping and farming supplies are sold. You can also purchase them easily online.

BEING GOOD STEWARDS

Good chicken-keepers keep growing. The more experiences you put under your belt, the more you can understand the many facets of life with chickens, seeing them in a new way each time.

BOREDOM BUSTERS

Straw bales can be used to create barriers between feeders and waterers to promote walking or jumping by placing hay bales in such a way that birds can either jump over the bales or walk in an S-shape to get to food and water. However, this should be done under careful supervision to make sure no birds go without food and water.

Alternatively, you could just place food and water far away from each other to increase walking distance. **hf**

#49



Keeping a Clean Coop

Having the right tools for the job makes the task easier. Invest in a solid, dependable rake and shovel. Have several empty, reliable buckets at the ready. A wheelbarrow is also a must for transporting the broken-down matter from coop to compost.

CHICKENS®

Chickens

FROM HOBBY FARMS®

The Essential Poultry Publication

Expert Advice

Roosters, hens, chicks, country small-flocks, urban backyards

Health Management

Feeding, watering, supplementation, incubating, parasites, disease, illness

Breed Guidance

Heritage, meat birds, egg layers, dual-purpose, ornamental, exotic

Coop Care

Seasonal maintenance, design plans, chicken tractors and runs

Subscribe Today!

Get all this and so much more 6 times a year at:



Subscribe at HobbyFarms.com or call 844-330-6373.



**LOOKING FOR
ANSWERS?**

We've Got 'em!

HOBBYFARMS.COM