

Barling Poultry

Newsletter

June 2011




Keeping Chickens is fun for the whole family!

We can see from this very old photo that keeping chickens has been a family occupation for many years. Luckily 3 years olds tend not to smoke these days! We found this photo and would love to know how and why it was taken, but think it is probably capturing their best breeding cockerel.

Note: Lidl's sell 1 gallon of bleach for 75p ←

Drinking Water

A hen's body is mainly water and the egg they lay is nearly all water so we cannot stress enough the importance of hens having access to clean water from dawn until dusk. Chickens' whose water intake is reduced won't eat as much as those with unrestricted access to water, so they won't grow as fast or lay as many eggs either. If a hen becomes dehydrated it could even stop laying eggs for weeks. On an average day each hen may drink a pint of water. In hot weather, that amount almost doubles. Table birds will drink even more as their metabolism works much faster. Hens don't like water that's too warm and they also avoid dirty water full of litter, dirt, & droppings so clean out water containers properly and keep in shade. Green algae which occurs inside water drinkers during the summer is very toxic to hens! 

When using water systems, or filling smaller water drinkers adding bleach will reduce or eliminate most disease organisms in water, drinkers, and water lines.

Daily Drinking Use: 1 teaspoon (5ml) chlorine bleach (sodium hypochlorite) in 20 litres of drinking water disinfects the water of germs. Hens will drink the water & will not be harmed. Stops algae/bacteria growing.

Cleaning Use (not to drink): 30 ml Chlorine Bleach in 25 litres water. Use this solution to rinse, soak, or clean equipment. Let stand at least one hour and then rinse with fresh clean water.

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Trimming nails/feathers

Long toe nails

Hens tend to keep their nails/claws short by constantly scratching around on the soil. Now and then an older hen might grow a nail too long to grind down. In these cases you should clip the nails using sharp canine clippers or garden secateurs. Hens have a very good blood supply to their nails so it is important not to cause injury by trimming to short. If you look at the nail in sunlight, then you will see inside the nail is a dark long pointed shape – this is the blood supply. Alternatively you can file the nails shorter using a coarse file.

Dirty feathers around bottom

Hens tend to keep themselves very clean and spend a lot of time preening their feathers. Sometimes the feathers below the vent become very dirty and matted and the hen cannot clean this. It may be caused by dirt, upset stomach or injury.

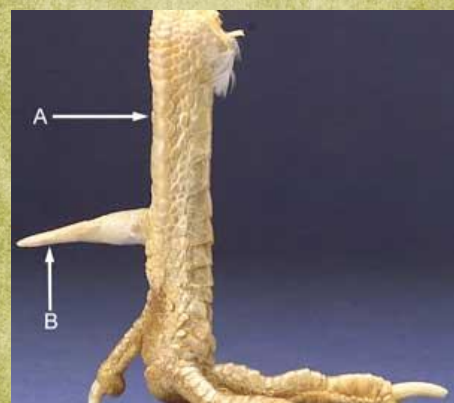
In this case using sharp scissors you can trim the dirty feathers away which will soon grow back. We have a lot of hens with 'bald bottoms' that we have trimmed. It also helps when you keep cockerels with your hens, as the mating process can also mat the feathers on both the cock and hen around their vents.

Cockerel Spurs (photo right) These grow to enable the male to protect himself, but will grow too long in time. Photo here shows the leg (A) and the male spur (B) which is a bone growth covered in keratin which grows. The end can gently be filed down – again it contains a blood supply.



Flight Feathers

Hens are not great flyers, but can often clear a fence if they want to. To prevent yours achieving too much height, you can trim the flight feathers on one wing only. This puts them off balance when trying to fly. It is painless, like cutting our own fingernails. Use sharp scissors. Again feathers have a blood supply up to 2 inches from the base of the feather so cut them slowly.





Splayed Leg

When you hatch eggs it is important that chicks are not kept on a slippery surface, like newspaper or cardboard, because they are very susceptible to a condition called 'splayed leg'. Quite simply, the legs slide open and the chick lacks the muscle to keep its legs together. It is often possible to correct this if you act quickly but easier to prevent by raising chicks initially on an old towel or other non-slippery surface. Take a sticky plaster and cut this length ways to give you two plasters which are 7.5mm wide. The wound dressing in the middle is the right length that the chick legs need to be held apart.



Use one plaster to form little 'chick handcuffs' around both ankles (see pic on right →), then use the other piece to wrap around the other side, sticking to the first piece of plaster. The ankle cuffs keep the chicks legs together and allow the muscles to develop correctly. You may find they come off after a day and you need to put new ones on. If it is going to work, it will be corrected within 7-10 days.

Table Birds



Just a reminder that day old Hubbards next available 15th June, a great free ranging chicken ready for the table in 12 weeks. We also have a few day old Pekin ducklings available same day, these are also ready for the table in 12 weeks, or the girls make fantastic egg layers... Turkey baby poult on 3rd June, Norfolk Blacks sold out but a few White or Bronze still available, great for Christmas, or good as a family pet...

Feed Prices

Amazingly we have been told that due to increases in the price of grain, that all feed will be rising again this month. Feed increased 6 times in 2010 which we have never known before (in fact in some years it has gone down!). There does seem to be real pressures that will see all of our daily foodstuffs increasing, particularly the price of meat – perhaps more reason to raise your own table birds too?



Reminder - Worm your hens every 3 months at the least...

Next Month..

Sewing the skin of a hen following injury, Feather mites, curled toes in chicks...

"It's a poultry matter"

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