

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SHELTER CARE FOR CHICKENS

Mary Britton Clouse, Chicken Run Rescue, 8/2009

Intake exam protocol:

PHYSICAL EXAM FOR CHICKENS

http://www.brittonclouse.com/chickenrunrescue/Copy_of_%20PHYSICAL_Exam_%20FOR%20Cc1.pdf

Standard procedures:

- fecal for intestinal parasites
- prophylactic treatment for external parasites for external- poultry dust, Revolution or Ivomec applied topically.

Housing:

quarantine

Large dog size hard carriers are helpful to contain infectious mater and parasites and keep injured birds quiet. Healthy birds should be completely segregated from sick ones or at least stacked on top, sick birds below to prevent gravity borne infectious material. After improvement is seen, can be moved to roomier housing.

Medications can be administered in food or drinking water for large groups exposed to illness. Very sick/injured birds need direct administration as prescribed by vet. Reference resource with dosages for chickens: *Exotic Animal Formulary* by James Carpenter.

short term (days)

Stainless steel cages with fully opening front door. Solid substrate, no wire flooring. Best situated at chest height for easy capture. Minimum space requirements: 2 sq. ft per bird. Free time during cage cleaning.

long term (weeks)

Interior dog runs with concrete flooring. Minimum space requirements: 2 sq. ft per bird. Free time during cage cleaning.

Outside access very desirable (netted over). Minimum space requirements: 10 sq. ft per bird.

Chicks under 6 weeks

Provide additional warmth- 95 degrees (heating g pad or low lamp) with access to shade or cool area first week, 10 degrees less each week till room temp reached. 1 sq. ft per bird.

Food:

- Nutritionally balanced crumble.
 - 0-18 weeks- Purina Mills® Start & Grow® SunFresh® Recipe
 - 18 weeks and older Purina Mills® Layena® SunFresh® Recipe
 - Sick birds: Roudybush Maintenance crumble.
- Fresh greens and fruits. Bread given small amounts.
- Cracked corn, seeds are junk food but can be given sparingly as treats.
- Fresh deep water in hanging cups (not drip). 1 cup per bird per day minimum.

Enrichment furnishings/bedding:

- Shredded paper works very well and is cheap and nontoxic. Change daily.
- Perches 3" diameter or larger can be placed directly on cage floor.
- Hang on dishes (8 oz. or larger per bird) prevent soiling food and water
- Handful of hay or straw for stress reducing activity

Chicks under 6 weeks:

- Provide shallow water less than 1 inch) with rocks in it (they can drown)
- For injured or weak chicks, keep with group but place small bird cage over chick in same pen.

Social:

- Group in compatible pairs of same sex if possible. Cover chain link of adjoining housing with *vinyl* poultry fencing to prevent pecking but transparent for socializing.
- Segregate or visual barrier for obvious aggression issues.

Environment:

- Avoid housing with predatory animals (ie dogs).
- Avoid noisy, high traffic areas.
- Dark for sleeping hours.

Capture and Handling:

- Herd bird to corner using slow deliberate movement. Fast= predator, slow = less threat.
- Place hands over top part of wings (shoulders) and hold securely but do not squeeze. Pick up and hold under arm to keep wings in place. Support feet with other hand if bird will tolerate.
- Restraint for transport or examination: drape towel over shoulders cape style and wrap around body.
- Pole nets should only be used with caution to prevent feather breakage or injury.

Placement screening and adoption options:

For screening checklist, see

<http://www.brittonclouse.com/chickenrunrescue/#ADOPT>

Free to good home placements, swaps, disposal at feed stores for slaughter and blind online classified ads are not responsible or appropriate placement strategies. Establish a contact list of prescreened, responsible rescue organizations with written screening and adoption contracts or individuals with appropriate accommodations (permanent placement, especially rural. Wildlife rehabilitation organizations often have such a list.

Many shelters are now using PetFinders or similar sites to place chickens:

<http://www.petfinder.com/register/index.html>

In addition to placing local ads, there is a site where you can list farm animals available for adoption, including chickens, from all over the country. To prevent people from habitually dumping unwanted animals, they do limit users to one time. That site is:

<http://www.farmanimalshelters.org/placementbb.htm>

You can also contact the following sanctuary association for advice:

<http://www.asaanimalsanctuaries.org/AboutASA/aboutASA.htm>