



Sanitation and Disease Prevention for Poultry

Fact Sheet No. 2.512

Livestock Series | Health

Byron F. Miller*

For the small poultry flock owner (100 birds or less) disease prevention is essential. Basic disease prevention rules in a poultry operation, regardless of size, are:

- Keep birds isolated from people, animals, and other birds.
- Provide a good sanitation program. This is essential to poultry health.
- Provide the proper balanced diet for your bird's stage in life and fresh clean water to reduce stress.
- Practice good management with an all-in-all-out replacement program.

Isolation

Isolation is a basic and sound principle for preventing disease in your flock. Anything that moves, living or non-living, can be a vector and bring pathogenic agents to your birds. The wind can carry virus particles for long distances. They can be attached to dust, equipment, animals or people. You can protect your birds from the wind but air circulation and ventilation is a basic necessity. Anything the size of insects and larger must be managed. Strive to keep your birds from being unnecessarily exposed to disease by the following practices:

- Purchase only newly hatched chicks or fertile eggs for stock replacement.
- If you must purchase adult birds, quarantine them for four weeks before adding to flock.
- Keep people, dogs, cats, and vehicles out of poultry houses.
- Wear clean clothing in your poultry house, especially shoes that you do not wear elsewhere.

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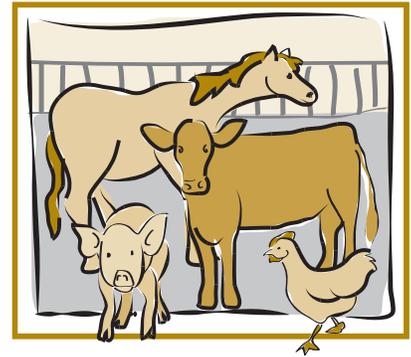
- Do not enter other people's poultry houses. If you do, change clothes, shoes and wash prior to working with your own flock.
 - Screen all openings to control insects, rodents and wild birds.
 - Care for young birds first, then older birds and finally birds that are ill. Working healthiest to sickest helps prevent spread of diseases to your healthy birds.

Sanitation

Sanitation should be a way of life. The most effective sanitizer is hot water, detergent and a brush. Be sure to first use the shovel and scraper. Remove as much filth, litter, organic matter, and debris as possible before trying to sanitize a surface. Chemicals will not substitute for a good cleaning program. They only help clean and sanitize after the shoveling, scraping and scrubbing is properly completed. Having a small tub of water and disinfectant near the entry of the coop to dip the bottom of your shoes upon entry and exit is a good measure.

Many food grade chemical sanitizers are available to use on clean surfaces. Chlorine and lye are good germicides, relatively inexpensive, and must be used with care. Borax is effective with long-time exposure to the microorganisms. Sunlight is a cheap sanitizer and available to all. However, sunlight does not penetrate well and may require days to be effective.

- Place new birds in a well-cleaned, dry and sanitized pen.
- Allow houses to remain clean and vacant at least two weeks between broods or flocks.
 - Keep equipment, especially waterers, clean and sanitary.
 - Remove manure from pens and dispose of it promptly. Do not stockpile it near the poultry house.
 - Manage rodents by eliminating habitat and access to feed and water sources.



Quick Facts

- Biosecurity measures will help with disease prevention and are essential for the poultry flock owner. Biosecurity consists of the methods an owner can use to decrease diseases from affecting their flock.
- Good management will include isolation practices, a stringent sanitation protocol and a sound nutritional program.
- Chemicals are not a substitute for overall good management practices.
- Clean water is the least expensive nutritional component but one of the most important a flock owner can provide for poultry.
- Follow an all-in-all-out replacement program.

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Nutrition

A sound nutrition program is the best practice to keep your birds healthy. Feed is the major expense in caring for poultry, and many people try to save money by diluting a well-balanced diet with grains, etc. If you have grains available, purchase the proper concentrates and mix according to directions to give your birds the proper diet. Unbalancing a scientifically prepared diet is not economical and can contribute to health problems. Feed a balanced ration at all times that is appropriate for the bird's stage in life (i.e. starter, layer, maintenance, scratch).

Water is a critical component for poultry health. They need 2 to 3 pounds (1/4 to 1/3 gallon) of water for every pound of feed they consume. Be sure it is available when they need it. Provide clean and fresh water between 40° and 70°F.

Flock Management

Flock management is a combination of all the above factors and many others to make your poultry project a sound, enjoyable and profitable enterprise.

- Purchase only strong, vigorous, healthy stock.
- Follow sound health and welfare practices.
- Sanitize and set up brooder facilities and have them working properly before new chicks arrive.
- Keep different aged birds separate.
- Follow an all-in-all-out replacement program.
- If you must have two or more age groups on one farm, care for the youngest first and work toward the oldest birds.
- Replace your stock on a regular basis.
- Be considerate of your neighbors.