



Caring for your Chicken

Chickens make very good pets and are generally fairly easy to care for. Many people fall in love with their unique and interesting personalities and we love them!

It is important to make sure when you acquire a chicken that it has received the appropriate vaccinations. Some viruses require vaccination at one-day of age. Unfortunately if they do not receive this vaccination they cannot be effectively vaccinated later in life. For many of the viral diseases there is no effective treatment so it is very important that you try to only buy chickens that have already been vaccinated.

Husbandry:

All birds are predisposed to feet problems (pododermatitis) if they are kept on an incorrect surface. This problem is particularly common in chickens, therefore it is extremely important to ensure that you have the correct flooring. Avoid wire and concrete floors as this predisposes to damage to the bottom of their feet.

It is also important to provide perching for chickens. It allows them to exercise their feet and they generally enjoy perching. Natural branches or dowel perches can be used however it is important to have varying diameters of the perch selected. If you intend on keeping your chickens in an enclosure or chicken coop then it is very important to ensure they have enough space to express their normal behaviours, including dust bathing.



It is important not to have too many chickens in a small area as this can lead to a range of problems and can allow diseases to spread easily. The enclosure should provide adequate protection from predators and adverse weather. Shaded or covered areas are important, so that they can cool off in warm days and subsequently shelter from rain, wind and other prevailing weather conditions.

Deworming with an appropriate drug combination should be performed regularly. There is multiple different methods of deworming and it is best to contact us to ensure that you have the





appropriate drug combination and method of administration to meet your needs. We recommend regular faecal testing for chickens so that we can best select the right de-worming medication and protocol.

Diet

Chickens have specific dietary requirements depending on their age and activity levels. In general, your chicken's dietary requirements can be reached by providing a high quality commercial poultry pelleted diet as the majority of their diet. The protein content is important and this should be displayed on the packaging. Growing poultry require a higher percentage of protein (often around 18-20%) where as mature birds often require lower levels of protein (generally around 14-16%) depending on their egg laying activity. If you are unsure what amount of protein your chicken should have then please get in touch with us. Calcium supplements can also be offered to chickens in lay if needed. Fresh vegetables, mealworms and other small insects as well as safe table scraps can also be offered to supplement the diet. Clean fresh water should be provided at all times.



Common problems

Lethargy and weight loss are common symptoms that unwell chickens may show. Unfortunately these symptoms are not specific to any particular disease and if you see any of these signs it is best to organise a consultation as soon as possible.

Worm burdens are common as most poultry are kept on soil or sand; both of which provide a good environment for the worms to breed. Many of the deworming medications that are sold through pet shops are ineffective so it is best to discuss your planned worming protocol with your vet to ensure that it will be effective. External parasites are also common in poultry and once again many of the treatment products sold at pet shops are ineffective.

Chickens are susceptible to a range of viruses that can cause symptoms including paralysis, skin lesions and respiratory disease.

Reproductive diseases are very common, especially in hens that have been rescued from battery farms. Chickens with reproductive disease can show a range of symptoms with the most common being an enlarged or distended coelom (abdomen). These diseases can be very serious and life-threatening however can be successfully treated in many situations.

We recommend health check-ups for chickens every 6-12 months.

