

The Rooster's Crow

Winter Tips

Don't let that frost bite!

When frostbite occurs, the skin and the underlying tissue becomes frozen and damaged from very cold and humid conditions. One step to keeping frostbite at bay is to apply 'WAXELENE' on their combs, wattles, shanks and feet. It is best to slather them up at night once they have gone to roost. The waxeline will have a better chance to soak in and not get scraped off. Waxeline is preferred over petroleum jelly first because petroleumis synthetic and synthetic products that don't break down are just awful. Second, Waxelene has natural beeswax in the product which forms a shell protection once applied. To apply, rub the waxeline in your hands to warm and gently rub on combs, wattles, shanks and feet. (If your birds have feathered shanks, skip this body part)The most damaging contributing factor to frostbite is humid conditions inside the coop. Once a chicken has frostbite, not only will the damaged area fall off, their production will decrease; especially if the comb is damaged. Their combs are very vascular and having healthy blood flow contributes to their overall health.



PREPARING YOUR FLOCK FOR WINTER



Yes, it is coming and we must be prepared. Cedar Crest Farm breeds Cold Hardy birds (and Polish because we love them) Although chickens are prepared by their very being; down feathers that cover their bodies, continuous movement, continuous eating, they still need a bit of help from us flock keepers. At night, your chickens will huddle together for warmth and spread their bodies over their feet to keep warm all over. (Proper roosts are a must!) Most chickens tend to avoid snowy conditions, for the most part. However, chickens prefer to be moving around, exploring and being chickens. We will cover five essential tips to help keep your flock healthy and cozy all winter. Something I practice every Spring and Fall is to give my entire flock a personal boost of "Rooster Booster" B-12 and "Rooster Booster" Poultry cell.

I take out as many syringes as I will need, 1 per bird. Fill each syringe (no needle) with .5cc of B-12. Once all are filled with B-12, add .5cc to the same syringe of Poultry Cell. Give to them orally. If you have never given medication orally, please, please let me show you how to do this! It is crucial that the liquid is given properly, as done incorrectly, can be extremely harmful to your birds.

Red Carpet Treatment

Chickens have very sensitive feet and walking on snow is the same for them as it would be if we were to walk on snow in bare feet; awful and painful. For this reason, I like to shovel a pathway and lay fresh straw. Even a small area where they can walk and just be outside is sufficient. Since the ground is frozen, there is not the temptation to scratch and peck but your flock will enjoy being outside, even for brief periods. My preferred straw type is Wheat Straw. A nice bale of wheat straw will contain the wheat heads and seeds, which your flock will enjoy pecking, scratching and finding the wheat seed treasures. Once the straw becomes heavily soiled or wet, remove immediately! **WET STRAW SHOULD NEVER BE LEFT DOWN!!** This does require work but nobody ever claimed farming, even chickens, is always equivalent to skipping through the daisies. Once you have established a path, it is relatively easy to maintain all winter. Another consideration is to cover part of the run with a heavy tarp. Choose an area that is preferably under trees and zip tie to the top of your run. This will also give the flock an area to sit under where snow will not accumulate.

To Heat Or Not To Heat

This is an ongoing debate between flock owners. Some say that if flocks are given heat and power outages occur, an entire flock can be wiped out. I say, for those of us who know the power is out and are using supplemental heat, we will find a way to keep our flocks safe. During a brutal winter storm that knocked out power a few years ago, I rented a haul, moved 30 birds into the van and kept the heat running for 2 days on and off until the power returned. Certainly not ideal and perhaps a bit on the overboard side but would I let my birds die? Of course not! That said, I always provide supplemental heat (WITH CAUTION!) Although I am not an advocate of artificially heating the coop, I do find that by the time January hits, Ohio weather is brutal and I want my flocks comfortable and able to breed in early February. There are many options that are safe but not cheap. The inexpensive methods (heat lamps) are far too risky and if that is the only method one can afford, it is best to skip the heat and let your flocks acclimate naturally. Having cold hardy breeds is essential if no supplemental heat will be used. Basic rules for supplemental heat: *Purchase heating sources that do not get extremely hot. A few products I recommend: Econo Heat Wall Heater (400 btu's) It can safely be mounted inside a coop to a wall and has an optional thermostat which can be preset. The Econo Heat runs about \$90.00 Heat plates are another alternative and really just take the edge off. They too can be installed on the coop walls near the roosts. The heat plate is about \$125.00. The "Sweeter Heater" is very low wattage and needs to be hung from a ceiling. These work well for brooding or for large coops where space is not an issue. However, they don't heat a large area very well. With any supplemental heat, the idea is to just "take the edge off" The heat should hover around 50-55 degrees. **Keeping nest boxes from freezing:** Some coops have their nest boxes located outside of the coop. In order to keep eggs from freezing, wrap the inside of the box with an insulated blanket that can be removed in spring. Do not use staple gun to secure, always screws! If you are one of the lucky ones who has electric in their coops, a heating pad with a "constant on" option is a luxury your ladies will love!! I keep mine set at 4 on most days but when continuous subzero weather hits, up to a 6. Another great product I just stumbled upon is the "My Warm Pet" heat pad. It is small, 10" or so in diameter. It is warmed by placing the product in the microwave and can be placed in the nest box under straw. Currently, I have one in a brooder box for chicks and it stayed warm for about 8 hours before I needed to reheat. Around \$30 at Amazon. Once the weather breaks, reduce the supplemental heating.

The Fun Part!

Winter is a great time to spoil your flock! My flocks get a warm breakfast every morning! I have a water cooler in our feed barn, which has a hot and cold setting. If I am feeding just regular layer that morning, I will add hot water until the feed is the consistency of oatmeal. Only make as much as they will eat by the end of the day, as you do not want wet food hanging around. Some other great warm meals: Oatmeal with bananas or other chicken friendly fruits, scrambled eggs and whole grain toast (I leave the toast whole and slightly butter) WARM PASTA (small alphabet or dilatini is best) Add a little buttermilk and some honey. TEA: I make a tea using our nesting box herbs. Serve warm, not hot. They not only will drink the water but eat the herbs afterward. Avoid making the tea too strong, as they prefer a weak tea. Use any herbal tea that contains food safe herbs for chickens.

Be creative, your flock will adore you and your treats!



WINTERIZE OUTDOOR RUNS: A simple way to keep the whipping winds from blasting cold on your flock, is to wrap the entire run with heavy plastic. Most runs are made with welded wire fencing of some sort. I simply get a box of the heaviest ply plastic and zip tie around the perimeter of my runs. While this may be time consuming, it helps keep the snow from drifting and the wind at bay.

As part of winterizing runs, it is ESSENTIAL that your flock has fresh water that does not freeze. THE VERY BEST method I have found to keep water from freezing is to purchase a heated pan. Just plug the pan cord into an outlet and put your galvanized drinker on top. (Never use plastic drinkers on the heated pan, they **will** melt) The water will never freeze and the pan keeps the snow melted around the drinker for easy access. They are about \$45.00 on amazon and it just may be the best \$45.00 you can spend for convenience and peace of mind.

DEEP LITTER: Most of us practice the deep litter method during the winter months. This truly is the best method for keeping warmth inside the coop. My usual practice is to perform a deep clean in early fall and again in spring. Remove all bedding, scrub the floors, walls, and nest boxes. As the shavings become soiled, turn the shavings and add fresh shavings to the top. By the end of winter, you will have beautiful fertilizer that is almost the consistency of soil. Bedding could accumulate to the tune of 6 or 12 inches. That is A-OK! Just be sure to keep the bedding turned, not relying on your flock scratching for aeration.

SUPPLEMENTAL LIGHT: My take on supplemental light is NO. Chickens, especially heritage breed layers, do best when they are permitted to go through their natural laying cycle. Supplemental heat will force them to lay and can burn them out before their time. Let their natural cycle occur. The ladies need a resting period if they are to perform at their best.



Just for you!

Scotch Eggs

These are wonderful for appetizers or make ahead breakfasts for the upcoming holidays!

*8 steamed eggs (fresh of course)

*8 breakfast sausage patties

*panko bread crumbs

*around 4 beaten eggs

*oil for frying

Steam your eggs for 20 minutes (they peel best if chilled first). Then you're going to form your sausage patties around your eggs, dip it in your beaten eggs, then into the panko bread crumbs, back into the egg and bread crumbs again. Fry them up till crunchy, golden brown and enjoy! These are large and around the size of a tennis ball. Can be served with any type of mustard, hot sauce or whatever your heart desires!



INSULATE AND VENTILATE

Proper coop insulation and ventilation in any poultry house is paramount. Not only for fighting frostbite but for keeping respiratory illnesses at bay. While it is our instinct to want to button up the coop as tight and sealed as possible, this is not the proper way to keep your flock warm. Chickens can withstand cold temperatures but humidity is a killer. Ventilation installed at the upper portion of the coop will keep the air dry. Chickens breathe in and out warm air, which adds to moisture.

Additionally, poultry droppings consist of about 85% water. Having good ventilation will remove the moisture in the air, keeping your flock breathing fresh air. Without proper air flow, all the prevention in the world will not keep your chickens healthy. How do you know if you have proper ventilation? Two easy ways to measure. First, I like to have a thermometer with a hygrometer in all my coops. Humidity should never be higher than 65% the ideal target range is 45%-60%. A less technical way to know if humidity is a problem is to look at windows. If there is frost on the windows, there is too much humidity inside the coop. However, once frost or moisture has built up on the windows, it is more difficult to eradicate the moisture. Best to purchase a gauge, they are inexpensive and work well. Bedding or litter, if left unturned, can cause a rise in humidity. Bedding should be turned DAILY and new shavings added. Proper ventilation should be air flow but never wind. Ventilation allows air to circulate and moisture to evaporate. If you put your hand near a vent, you should feel air but never a breeze. The best way to ventilate is with metal vents on either side of the coop. Adding a bathroom or attic fan installed on the roof. The roof fans that are activated by wind are wonderful and easy to install.

With a little bit of preparation and a whole bunch of love, your chickens will stay healthy and happy all winter. As always, I am available to any of my chicken people for help, advice or guidance.

An abundance of Blessings to you and your flock!

Lisa Samples

Cedar Crest Farm and Feed

November's Sacred Space Is

"The Chick Inn"

Ashley Derecskey

My interest in chickens came out of nowhere. We stayed at an estate in California that had chickens on the grounds. I found myself excited every morning to go check on the chickens and gather the eggs. When we came back from our trip I began investigating and researching how to raise chickens. I knew three things 1. I wanted pretty eggs 2. I wanted pretty chickens 3. I wanted to make sure I was fully committed to raising healthy and happy chickens. So I continued to research, which led me to Cedar Crest Farm and Feed. Contacting Lisa was the straw that broke the camel's back. She had two of my three necessities, and with her help and expertise, I knew #3 was soon to be in the bag. Lisa checked out our potential coop and made some recommendations on what to do with the space, how many birds, etc... The commitment was made and the creation of "The Chick Inn" was in full swing. My handy husband built out the 150 sq. ft. space which was originally a studio turned office, turned storage shed, equipped with french doors, heat, electric and cable. He designed a Poop Shoot... per Lisa's recommendation. The shoot catches all the nightly droppings and is easy to clean. When designing the coop, I knew that I wanted it to be a pretty space that I loved to spend time in. It turned out better than I could have ever imagined. Dan added a front porch along with a separate area to store feed, medical supplies, shavings, and any other chicken necessities. The run, which is approximately 24 w x 80 l, is covered with wire fencing from top to bottom for ultimate protection. Within the run, the chickens have some excellent hiding spaces, a swing, dusting bath and several perches. Again, I wanted a space that I could just sit out and enjoy the chickens. We also felt it was critical to give them plenty of space to keep them from getting bored easily. The coop and run are surrounded by herbs and chicken friendly flowers. Going out to my coop is something I look forward to doing daily. Pure joy and happiness overcomes me when I check on my girls, collect their eggs and spend time in such a beautiful space. Thank You Ashley for sharing!

Don't forget to send us your "Sacred Space" to be featured in our next Newsletter! If picked you will receive a Cedar Crest Farm and Feed Goodie Bag! Please send yours to Lisa@cedarcrestfarmandfeed.com

