



Backyard Poultry

America's Favorite Poultry Magazine

JUNE/JULY 2026 • VOLUME 21, NUMBER 3

NEW USDA POULTRY RULES TAKE EFFECT IN 2026

How will they affect you?

EXTERNAL PARASITE CONTROL

Understanding the different methods

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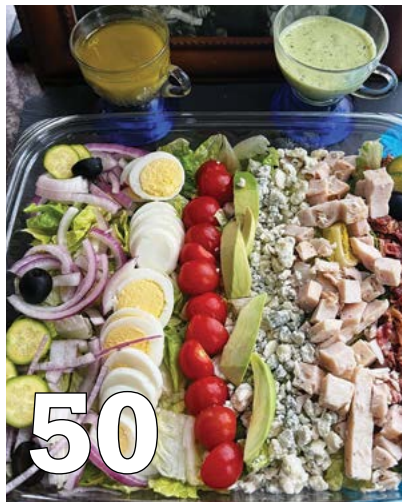


On The Cover

*A hen and her chicks. — Suzanne
Matteo, Black Witch Chickens*

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EDITORIAL

Editor-in Chief

Audra Trosper
editor@backyardpoultrymag.com

Copy Editors

Karmin Garrison
Ana Skemp
Ann Tom

Jeannette Simonson
Cheryl K. Smith

Publication Designer

Samantha Ingersoll

Audience Engagement

Emily Clanton

CUSTOMER SERVICE

customerservice@countrysidemag.com
970-392-4419

ADVERTISING OFFICE

1503 SW 42nd St, Topeka, KS 66609
adinfo@ogdenpubs.com
Display advertising rates on request.
800-678-5779

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From the Editor

Summer has arrived

in a flurry of warm sunshine, rolling thunderstorms, and new feathers as chicks grow into adolescents. In many flocks anyway. My flock is a stable number this year, despite the many temptations that plagued me throughout chick days at the farm stores, hatchery advertisements, and the many cute offerings on social media. Much to Penny's approval, she has no interest whatsoever in chicks. Between her egg-laying job, her job as the flock escapee, and her gig as my assistant editor, she's deemed herself a career hen.

I'm a little proud of myself for the restraint I've shown this year (never mind the plans I've drawn up for a new brooder, or the incubator I have in my online cart for next year; you didn't see those and we're talking about this year). So, at my place, summer is a steady hum of mature chickens, growing gardens, and pet goats that, while not mature yet, are no longer babies either. In a way, it's nice. I don't have to wonder how they'll handle storms or even fireworks.

Since we're located within the city limits of a small town, the 4th of July is pretty wild. Thankfully, both goats and chickens seem to write it off as humans just being weird and noisy again. Constant surveillance of the goats last year during their first encounter with the loud holiday revealed that even the loudest booms weren't worth flicking an ear at. They had their stall, their big floor fan to relax in front of, their hay, and their radio. They couldn't have cared less what we were doing. I attribute that to our intense thunderstorms. And maybe that's why the chickens can't be bothered to look up from scratching or dust bathing either. Even during the fireworks at night, the hens are busy snoring on their roost bars.

Penny says that she and the other hens are far too busy to pay attention to the doings of silly humans. Not that I don't worry about them and check on them via camera, because I do. I can't help it; I'm a silly human.

However, maybe you're one of those who've held out this long but can feel yourself slowly caving to the pull of fuzzy-feathered chicks. If you find yourself ready to click on a post offering just what you were hoping for, move your mouse away and read Jaclyn De Candio's article on avoiding poultry-selling scams first. Because if it seems too good to be true, it probably is.

If you're still deciding what you want, or maybe you already have a coop full but you still want more, Patricia Lewis highlights the Jersey Giant as a good option for a meat breed that can also keep you in eggs.

Even if you've already chosen your chicks and you've settled in for the rest of the year, you know that external parasites can be a problem. Jaclyn de Candio covers the pros and cons of various methods for managing them.

Summer also heralds the show season, and Sherri Talbot discusses what you need to know if you plan to show waterfowl.

And, if you're like Wren Everett (and me), your love of chickens makes you notice them when they're in shows, movies, and even video games. Take a walk with her through different media to see some of the amusing ways chickens are portrayed in pop culture.

From my coop to yours, have an egg-cellent day!



Audra, Backyard Poultry Editor-in-Chief.



Penny, Assistant Editor.



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POULTRY NEWS

BY KENNY COOGAN

In "Poultry News" we share poultry stories of the current, odd, fun, and important. If there are stories that you'd like us to cover, or want to share with us, please email editor@backyardpoultrymag.com.

Backyard poultry

keepers live at the intersection of science, sustainability, and sometimes sheer comedy. This month's Poultry News stretches from innovative feed research in India to consumer psychology in Alabama, winter turkey chaos in Wisconsin, and fascinating new findings about how chickens respond to distress calls. Let's take a look at what's shaping our flocks.

Waste to Feed: Black Soldier Fly Larvae

In a recent *Innovative Agriculture* magazine article, Dr. Rahul Deb Mukherjee published a paper titled "Waste to Feed: Black Soldier Fly Larvae (BSFL) as a Circular and Sustainable Protein Source." With feed costs continuing to challenge small-scale producers, his findings speak directly to backyard poultry keepers.

Dr. Mukherjee explains that "Black soldier fly larvae reduce feed reliance and disposal issues for backyard and small-scale chicken keepers by converting organic waste from farms and homes into a dependable on-site protein supply." For homesteaders, that means kitchen scraps and agricultural leftovers can become part of a sustainable feeding system.

He further notes that "BSFL-based feeding gives backyard poultry growers a workable option to

reduce ongoing feed costs without sacrificing bird performance by partially substituting expensive fish meal or soybean meal." Protein is often the most expensive component of a ration, so the ability to offset that cost without harming productivity is significant.

Dr. Mukherjee emphasizes that "Black soldier fly larvae are particularly well-suited for smallholders' circular, low-input poultry systems because of their capacity to flourish on food scraps and agricultural residues." This circular model directly connects waste reduction with feed self-sufficiency—a practical sustainability solution for backyard flocks.

For small poultry keepers without access to advanced feed-processing facilities, formulation simplicity also matters. As Dr. Mukherjee points out, "the lack of anti-nutritional components in BSFL meal makes feed formulation easier." He adds that "BSFL's high digestibility and bioactive ingredients, like lauric acid, promote backyard flock health and may lessen the need for veterinarian care and antibiotics."

Space constraints often limit backyard innovations, but BSFL systems are adaptable. Dr. Mukherjee explains, "Even in backyard settings with limited space, BSFL raising is achievable due to its minimal land, water,

and energy requirements." He also highlights flexibility in scale, noting that "BSFL production can be scaled from a household bin to a small shed."

Perhaps most compelling for self-sufficient poultry keepers is his observation that "Smallholders can increase economic and environmental efficiency by converting low-value organic waste into high-value animal protein by incorporating BSFL into backyard poultry diets."

Do Value-Added Labels Influence Buyers?

Over at Auburn University, Ainsley P. Jessup of the Department of Poultry Science recently published a study in *Applied Food Research* titled "The effect of value-added labels on consumer acceptance, purchase intention, and willingness to pay for chicken breast bites."

The objective was simple but important: determine whether a "Humanely Processed" label influences consumer acceptance, purchase intention, or willingness to pay (WTP) compared to "All-Natural," "USDA Organic," or no label at all.

In the study, 116 regular chicken consumers evaluated identical chicken breast bite samples presented with one of the three claims or no claim. Interestingly, there were no significant

differences in overall liking or purchase intention among the labels. Participants were also unwilling to pay more than the market average of \$8.50 per pound.

Study participants did, conversely, respond differently to the categories of overall enjoyment and flavor perceptions based on animal welfare attitudes and labeling knowledge. However, the “Humanely Processed” claim didn’t outperform other labels in driving willingness to pay.

For small farms and homesteads planning to sell poultry, this has real implications.

First, humane practices remain ethically essential—but a label alone may not generate a price premium. Consumers often say they value animal welfare, yet their wallets have limits.

Second, direct marketing may be more powerful than printed claims. Backyard producers can offer something large retail brands can’t: transparency. Farm tours, social media updates, and face-to-face conversations build trust in ways labels can’t replicate.

Third, pricing must reflect reality. If your cost of production is higher due to small-scale methods, pasture rotation, or specialty feed, the value needs to be communicated clearly. Customers may be willing to pay fairly—but not infinitely.

For homesteaders entering local markets, the message is clear: Your story matters as much as your label.

Turkeys on the Attack in Wisconsin

In Wisconsin, wild turkeys have been making headlines. According to NBC Chicago, residents report flocks chasing pedestrians, blocking traffic, and pecking at vehicles.

The online videos are both fascinating and funny—toms puffed up, strutting through suburban streets as if they own the place. Some residents have been followed down sidewalks, while others describe turkeys lingering aggressively in driveways.

Wildlife officials suggest habituation plays a role. When wild turkeys become accustomed to human presence—especially in areas without hunting pressure—they may grow bold. Winter flock dynamics and dominance behaviors can intensify displays.

For backyard poultry keepers, it’s a reminder that wild and domestic birds share ecosystems. Spilled feed can attract wild turkeys and other wildlife, creating both nuisance and biosecurity concerns. Secure storage and clean feeding areas are simple but effective management steps.

Still, if you haven’t seen the Wisconsin turkey chase clips online, they’re worth a watch.

Distress Calls and Social Stress

A recent paper published in *Royal Society Open Science* examined how distress calls function as social stressors in birds. Researchers found that when birds hear alarm or distress vocalizations from other members of their species, their own stress responses can elevate—even if they aren’t directly threatened.

Chickens are highly social animals. When one bird panics, others pay attention.

The study suggests that repeated exposure to distress calls may influence vigilance behavior and physiological stress markers. In backyard settings, chronic stress can impact immune response, growth, and egg production.

Think about predator scares, loud construction noise, overcrowding,

or frequent handling. Even if a threat is brief, the ripple effect through a flock can linger.

For poultry keepers, this reinforces the importance of calm, stable environments. Visual barriers, adequate space, and predictable routines may help reduce stress cascades. Gentle handling and minimizing unnecessary disturbances aren’t just niceties—they’re humane management strategies.

Science continues to confirm what observant backyard keepers often sense intuitively: Chickens communicate constantly, and they respond emotionally to what they hear.

From converting food scraps into feed to understanding how labels influence buyers, and from suburban turkey antics to the science of flock stress, poultry research and news continue to inform the way we raise birds. ●

KENNY COOGAN earned a master’s degree in Global Sustainability and co-hosts the Mother Earth News and Friends podcast, which can be enjoyed at MotherEarthNews.com/podcast. He also hosts and created the television show *Florida’s Flora and Fauna with Conservationist Kenny Coogan*. To learn more about that program, visit www.FloridasFloraAndFauna.com.

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Spectrum Poultry is a family-run

homestead in Rhode Island, spanning 4 acres. We're known as the "Home of the Rainbow Eggs" for our vibrant egg colors and our heritage and rare chicken breeds. Our chickens are raised with hands-on daily care and intention. Everyone in our family plays a big role in helping out around the homestead. Our days are filled with early mornings, late nights, dedication, and a deep love for all the animals being raised on our homestead. We strive to ensure healthy birds and happy customers across the United States.

Our story began in the spring of 2016, when we surprised our three children with seven yellow chicks on Easter morning. We instantly fell in love with them. They brought so much life and happiness to our backyard. What started as a small, fun addition to the family quickly grew into something much more meaningful. Soon, our backyard hobby turned into a passion for hatching and raising chickens that produce a beautiful spectrum of egg colors.

Spectrum Poultry specializes in heritage and rare chicken breeds, including Langshans, Ameraucanas, Black Copper Marans, and Olive Eggers. All of our chickens are dual-purpose, and many lay the beautiful rainbow egg colors our customers love. Shades of vibrant blue, green, olive, tan, pinky blooms, and rich chocolate brown fill our customers' egg baskets. This creates a unique visual experience that reflects our name and mission.

Careful breeding practices help maintain both the diversity of egg colors and the overall quality and temperament of our birds. Langshans are considered to be a rare breed. If you're looking for eggs with a pink or lavender bloom, this breed carries those amazing genetics. Our family strives to preserve this magnificent heritage treasure. We always do our best to educate and raise awareness about these gentle giants. Langshans truly hold a special place in our hearts.

Spectrum Poultry offers shipping of day-old straight-run chicks and hatching eggs across the U.S. Shipping chicks and hatching eggs is another process that involves detailed preparation behind the scenes. Day-old chicks are packaged with extreme care using heat packs, nesting materials, and hydration support to help them travel safely. Boxes are clearly labeled and shipped using priority services to minimize travel stress. Hatching eggs are securely packaged in foam shippers and shipped fresh to help improve successful hatch rates for customers. Every shipment is handled as if it were being sent to a member of our family, reinforcing our commitment to quality and care.

One of the most meaningful parts of our work is that it's truly a family effort. Our children are involved in daily chores such as collecting eggs, filling water buckets, and learning to care for animals properly. This hands-on environment not only supports Spectrum Poultry but also instills the

values of hard work, responsibility, and compassion. We teach our children that homesteading is a lifestyle centered around agriculture, learning, and connection. It's important for us to show them that we're creating something wholesome for the family.

We grow oregano, lavender, sage, chamomile, thyme, parsley, and various mint varieties in our garden, around our yard, and on our deck in planters for our use and for the chickens. Herbs are beneficial for them because they provide essential vitamins. We like to spread our dried herbs in the coops, nesting boxes, and in their run spaces.

Oregano, thyme, and sage support their immune systems. Lavender and chamomile are some of our favorite herbs to grow, and we use them in our nesting boxes to help reduce stress and calm the chickens; plus, they always smell so good. We enjoy feeding our chickens basil and various mints. These herbs help keep the chickens' airways clear. Rosemary, lavender,





and mints can help repel mites and lice in the coop. We occasionally feed our chickens parsley because it's rich in vitamins K, C, and A, which support egg production. Dandelions are harvested from our yard to provide the chickens with essential nutrients, including iron and potassium.

Health and safety are also top priorities on the homestead. We maintain National Poultry Improvement Program (NPIP) certification, which means our chickens are regularly tested and monitored to support biosecurity and prevent disease. This level of responsibility provides our customers with peace of mind and reflects our dedication to ethical and professional poultry practices.

Spectrum Poultry represents more than colorful eggs and specialty chicks. It represents the beauty of starting out small, the courage to grow something meaningful, and the joy of sharing farm life with others. From those first seven Easter chicks to a thriving homestead shipping rainbow egg layers across the country, our journey has been built on passion, patience, and purpose. Behind every egg collected, every chick hatched, and every carefully packed shipment, our family is deeply committed to doing our very best each day. Spectrum Poultry isn't just raising chickens; it's cultivating connection, color, and community one flock at a time.

We're excited to share the joy of backyard poultry with others who dream of building their own flocks. Raising chickens became a way for us to slow down, reconnect with nature, and provide a meaningful agricultural experience right in our own backyard. Spectrum Poultry is on a heartfelt family journey rooted in curiosity, joy, and a simple surprise that changed everything. Thank you for following along with us.

—The Spectrum Poultry Family



Do You Have Something to Crow About?



We want to hear from you.

Send questions, comments, opinions, advice, upcoming events, etc. to: *Backyard Poultry* Editor, 1503 SW 42nd St, Topeka, KS 66609 or email editor@backyardpoultrymag.com.

Retired Hens

We asked on social media ... “What are your plans for hens that are no longer laying?” And you answered:

“They gifted me with food, I gift them with retirement life.”

—Rachel Spry

“Even if they don’t lay, they can continue to be part of the family.”

—Colleen Donovan

“Yard art and pest control.”

—Donna Horton-Berry

“The older chickens will sit on clutches of eggs. They will teach the chicks what to do. They keep the young pullets in line. They keep the rooster distracted. There are a lot of uses for older chickens.”

—Leeann Fitzell Coleman

“Probably going to make people mad, but we process them for food. My chickens aren’t pets, and this is the way I was raised. That being said, they have a very good life here.”

—Sarah Hammond

“Waste not, want not. You’ve given them a good life, fed them, housed them, and now it’s their turn to do one final payment in return. It’s how I grew up. We raised nearly all our food — be it vegetables, fruit, or meat.”

—Andrea Drenth

“Camp Kenmore. Extra roos and spent hens get used for soup stock, taco meat. My chickens aren’t pets.”

—Nancy Caulfield

Chicken Challenges

We asked on social media ... “What is the biggest challenge of raising chickens?” You told us:

“Resisting the temptation to *get only 2 more*. Which we all know turns into 50 more.”

—Milligan Farms

“Everything loves to eat chicken.”

—Corissa Vascovich

“For me, it’s culling. I generally just find a place in the chicken yard for the ones that have ‘disabilities.’ Even if it means building another coop.”

—Kristyn King

“Keeping the ground in their pen dry and clean.”

—Mark Williams

“The sweet roosters, the hens who snuck off and reappeared with a bunch of new chicks. Oops.”

—Robbie Tatro

“Chicken math.”

—Richard Rudolph

“Watering and feeding in the winter.”

—Mike Thomann

“Finding a sitter to watch your girls when you leave for a few days. Or weeks.”

—Ralphie Hollibaugh

“Letting some go because you can’t keep them all.”

—Jill Cleghorn

“Where to put a brooder next year when we plan on getting more chicks, and then integrating the new ones with the old ones without fights.”

—Debra Dowell

“Loving them, dealing with predators, and the fluidity that is life with chickens.”

—adventuresofarchieandveronica

“City ordinances.”

—Clinton Layne Young

“The coop. We have a large coop and long, cold winters; we use the deep litter method. Spring cleaning is a pain in the butt!”

—Michele Eva Wilson

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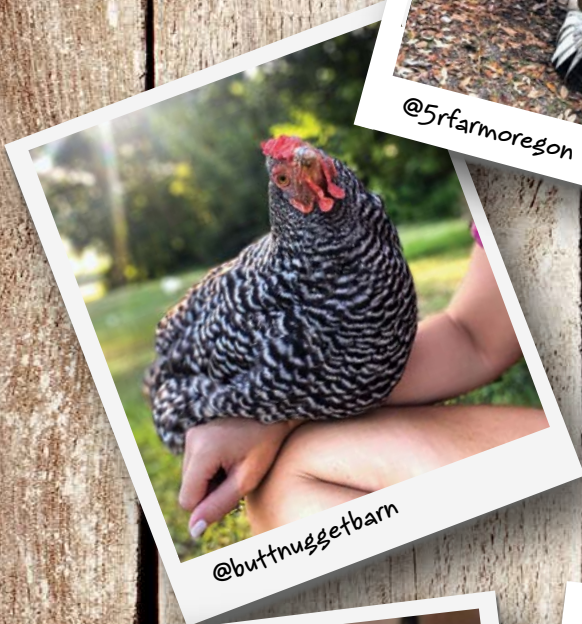
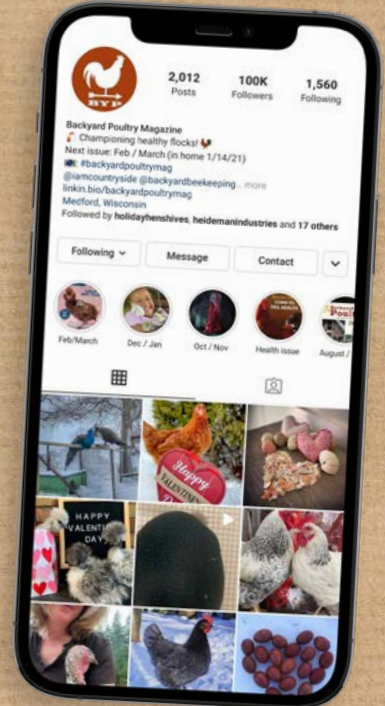
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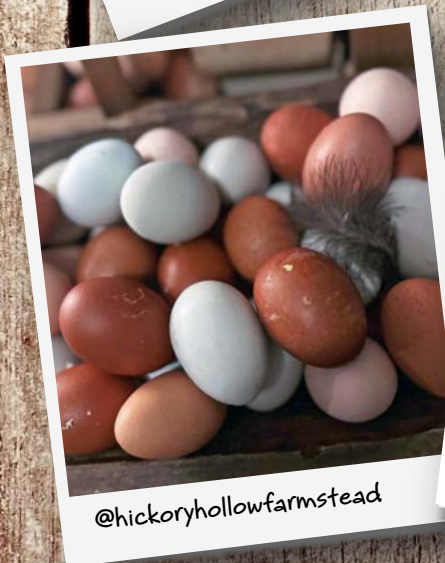


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Learn the challenges of showing ducks and geese.

BY SHERRI TALBOT

While the most common entries in poultry shows are standard and bantam chickens, waterfowl are also frequent entries. Waterfowl categories include bantam, light, medium, and heavy breed ducks; and light, medium, and heavy geese. Showing waterfowl can be quite similar to showing chickens, with emphasis placed on breed, color, body type, and health.

Like other poultry, waterfowl are arranged by species and

weight class, then by breed, variety (usually distinguished by color), and, finally, by age and sex. Birds will similarly be awarded ribbons based on these groupings: best in breed, best in class, and the overall best in show.

Getting Started

As with chickens, not all breeds are allowed in the show ring. The Australian Spotted duck, for instance, is a critically-endangered heritage breed not accepted into

American Poultry Association (APA) competitions. Verifying that a breed is recognized by its national poultry organization is the first step a breeder should take in preparing to show waterfowl.

Knowing which category they'll compete in is also important and can vary depending on where the birds are being shown. American Buff geese are recognized as a medium-weight goose in the U.S., but a heavy-weight bird in British shows. Interestingly,

With outbreaks of avian flu, many states have increased their disease-testing requirements for show flocks.

despite being a scientifically distinct species, Muscovy ducks are categorized as a large breed duck by the APA for competition purposes.

Choosing Birds

Finding quality waterfowl stock can be challenging, since they're less-commonly raised for poultry shows than chickens. Hatchery stock rarely meet breed standards; hatching eggs can be unreliable, and even in day-old goslings, quality may be difficult to determine.

Newcomers usually have better luck purchasing from established breeders who raise show birds. In fall, breeders will likely start looking to move young waterfowl that don't meet the standards for their breeding program, whether genetically or in the show ring. These birds will have a high upfront cost, but developing a breeding plan will be easiest when starting with waterfowl already part of an existing program.

Upon purchasing any bird, keep it separated from the current

flock until you're certain there are no health concerns. Estimates of how long to keep them separated range from two weeks to a month, with some recommending two months before incorporating new birds. Since waterfowl often don't show signs of avian flu, integration may be a risky proposal no matter what.

Getting Ready

Finding and showing birds can be difficult for any poultry breeder, but waterfowl have some extra challenges. They need to meet the breed standards, and breeders should know the requirements for their feet, beaks, heads, body structure, and feathers.

However, getting waterfowl comfortable with being handled by the judges can prove more of a challenge. Larger waterfowl are sometimes judged without being removed from the cage, but others will need to learn to remain calm while being held.

When preparing for the show ring, breeders should make sure



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that show birds are in the best possible shape. High-quality feed and grit, along with good care and grooming, will help them look their finest. There are also “tricks” some breeders use to help boost their birds’ chances in the ring, including vitamins to help them be more energized and supplements to help their colors look brighter and feathers healthier.

The time of year can also affect how waterfowl present. Breeders bring birds that aren’t molting to showcase their best colors and healthy feathers. Many waterfowl molt twice a year, so make sure to know when to expect feathers to begin falling.

When showing younger birds, many use artificial lighting to force them to lay earlier. This also forces earlier maturity in waterfowl hens, giving them an edge over the competition.

Health Requirements

Making certain the flock has appropriate health paperwork is vital. With outbreaks of avian flu, many states have increased their disease-testing requirements for show flocks. For instance, Maine requires National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) testing for all birds being shown or sold across state lines. This process

can be expensive for those looking to get into showing, and labs able to process the tests aren’t always immediately available, so leave plenty of time to make arrangements.

Some organizations may have other requirements concerning medication or vaccinations. The state of North Carolina doesn’t allow off-label use of medications in any poultry or livestock on the grounds and requires that on-label use be reported in advance. They also refuse entry to any animal that’s received a live vaccine within 30 days of the show.

Even if these requirements are met, birds that look unkempt or ill may be denied entry. Concerns about the spread of lice, mites, or disease in a poultry show require caution on the part of judges, administrators, and breeders. This means that breeders should make certain their birds are clean, deloused, parasite-free, and feeling great for their show.

At the Show

Poultry shows are stressful for birds, no matter what mitigation steps are taken, but ensuring they have clean food and water is a good start.

Waterfowl are messy birds, so frequent cleaning will help make them more pleasing to the

eye—and the nose—of attendees and judges alike.

While chickens are usually kept at eye level during shows, waterfowl cages are often left sitting on the floor. This results in admirers hovering over them, which increases the birds’ anxiety. A sign warning people not to poke at the waterfowl and a large enough cage to comfortably move away from those who ignore the sign can help with fear and aggression responses.

During judging, preventing people from moving in front of the cages will help the birds relax and allow judges to get a better view of their physiques. Breeders should also avoid hovering during judging, because while the birds may be familiar with their humans, this still provides excessive stimulation.

Take Precautions and Make Careful Choices

Showing waterfowl requires learning the breed standards and the requirements for local competitions. Concerns regarding disease may be higher in waterfowl, since they’re less likely to show signs of some illnesses. Waterfowl breeders should be aware of their chosen breeds’ annual molting cycles when selecting birds, so feather loss doesn’t interfere with shows. ●

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SHERRI TALBOT is the co-owner and operator of Saffron and Honey Homestead in Windsor, Maine. She raises endangered, heritage-breed livestock and hopes someday to make education and writing on conservation breeding her full-time job. Details can be found at SaffronandHoneyHomestead.com or on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/saffronandhoneyhomestead.

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INTERNET POULTRY-BUYING SCAMS

How to avoid them and find quality sellers.

BY JACLYN DE CANDIO

The internet has brought

the buying and selling of live animals into a whole new era. It's now easier than ever to find whatever you need for your flock—from breeding stock to barnyard mixes—at the touch of a button from anywhere in the nation. The downside is an atmosphere ripe for scammers.

With the proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) and ever-changing algorithms, there's been a sharp rise in fake hatcheries and online sellers that can capture even the savviest online users.

How to Spot a Scammer

One of the most common places people are lured into scams is via social media. Facebook, with its business profiles, community

groups, and Marketplace feature, is a major target for scammers.

Unfortunately, it's become difficult to distinguish between fake and authentic hatcheries and private sellers. They share many similarities, but there are several telltale signs.

Scammers tend to target what people really want by claiming to have rare breeds, hard-to-find colors, or by making unreasonable offers (e.g., large quantities always in stock with no hatch date schedule) with unrealistic shipping guarantees (e.g., undisclosed private delivery services that promise to bring orders "to your doorstep").

If you're new to buying poultry locally or through a hatchery, it's probably best to avoid Facebook until you're more experienced.

Beware of Facebook pages that have typos in the title or improper grammar. Sometimes, selecting "See page info" displays the country where the page was created. These pages often use AI logos or have vague titles such as "Generic Name and Generic Name poultry farm."

Another way to authenticate can be to reverse image search online to make sure the images aren't stolen.

Accredited hatcheries should be able to process normal credit and debit cards. An immediate red flag is any online sale request that requires payment other than via standard credit or debit cards.

AI has made it easy to build convincing but fraudulent websites. You might be able to pick up on clear "AI speak" writing patterns, but this isn't really reliable, as more professional companies are also using AI to help write their pages. A better way is to check if they have a physical address and a National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) number.

Beware of newly registered domains with no customer reviews outside the website. You might also be able to search the hatchery or farm name with "scam" online or check some poultry forums. But this is getting harder to do as more scams emerge.

Elements of a Quality Seller

A real breeder can show you real birds—on their property. Ask for current photos or even a short video with a handwritten note showing the date. A scammer will dodge that request.

A real hatchery will have a complete website and reviews on Google Business and on its social media pages. They should also have catalogs you can browse, with original photos; some even offer a free physical copy.



Research online breeders and hatcheries before placing your order.

Likewise, private sellers should have original photos and be able to provide additional photos upon request. You should be able to visit the hatchery, view the animals before payment, and make phone calls.

While real hatcheries tend to have listed hatch dates and limited quantities, there's no pressure to "buy now," nor is there an artificial sense of urgency.

Hatcheries and private sellers should demonstrate knowledge and transparency. They're more than happy to disclose NPIP participation, breed and line details, vaccinations, and shipping preferences over the phone.

Both private farms and public-facing hatcheries usually share their formal or informal policies upfront. These include written health and live-arrival policies, with clear minimum chick or hatching-egg orders required for shipping. And don't forget, they have realistic policies and don't make nonsensical guarantees, such as 100% hatch rates, zero mortality, or single chick shipments.

How to be a Responsible Buyer

Responsible buying takes practice, but fortunately, there are many ways to learn. Always use multiple sources of verification, and don't be shy about asking for references from multiple individuals in online poultry groups or forums.

Of course, all the basic internet shopping tips still apply. Think about the way you use credit cards or PayPal's "goods and services" mode. Make sure you receive a verifiable invoice and avoid peer-to-peer transactions without protection, unless you personally know the seller.

Real hatcheries have multiple points of verification, including a website (sometimes with facility photos) and a presence on multiple platforms with reviews and verifiable addresses.

If you're dealing with a private seller, don't hesitate to request

more photos, a video showing the date, or a photo with a handwritten note. Most scammers will disappear when these requests are made.

Finally, report suspicious pages on Facebook and other social media pages. Put out the word in your local poultry community to help protect others.

The best protections are education, patience, and a willingness to verify before you pay. Reputable poultry

transactions start long before chicks are shipped. They begin with responsible buyers who ask questions and expect transparency. ●

JACLYN DE CANDIO is an agriculture freelance writer based in southwest Ohio. She and her family raise broilers, turkeys, ducks, laying hens and other livestock on their small farm.



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JERSEY GIANT CHICKENS AS MEAT BIRDS

When you're ready to move away from the Cornish Cross.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY PATRICE LEWIS



Jersey Giant rooster and hen.

When selecting which breed of chicken

to raise in a backyard flock, most people are lured in by descriptions of “dual-purpose” birds, which promise to deliver both eggs and meat. Most popular breeds fall into this category: Rhode Island Red, Ameraucana, Buff Orpington, etc.

These claims aren't lies. Most breeds provide adequate numbers of eggs, and — technically — every chicken is edible as well. Dual purpose, right?

But try dressing out your average Rhode Island Red or Ameraucana rooster for the dinner table, and you're likely to be disappointed. The resulting carcass isn't much bigger than a Cornish game hen and seems hardly worth the effort. It might provide a frugal meal for a single person, but a single bird certainly doesn't provide enough meat for a family.

So, like most rural Americans, when it came to raising meat birds, we turned to Cornish Crosses. We raised these birds on and off for several years, but stopped for two reasons.

REASON ONE: As meat birds, Cornish Crosses fulfill their function superbly. They gain weight at a speed and with a seriousness awesome to behold. Within 10 weeks at the maximum, they're ready for the freezer. Except here's the thing: If you don't put them in the freezer by 9 to 10 weeks, their bodies start to break down. Their organs fail. Their joints give out. They can't walk. Sometimes they just die. It's horrifically sad.

REASON TWO: Cornish Crosses are hybrids. We can't breed them to replenish the flock. We're trying to make our homestead more self-sustaining, not less. If we have to purchase chicks from the feed store every time we want to raise meat birds, we're taking a step backward, not forward. We looked into what it takes to breed Cornish Crosses, but it turns out they have a complicated tangle of genetics that makes it difficult for the home breeder to replicate the exact lineage without a lot of dedicated work.

Several years ago, after butchering our last batch of Cornish Crosses, we decided “no more.” Never again did we want weird, freaky, mutant chickens on our farm.

Instead, we started looking into the large heritage breeds that provided meat for the table before factory farms were a thing. That's how we discovered Jersey Giants.

Bred as a Table Bird

The Jersey Giants are widely recognized as the largest purebred chicken breed by weight. As the name implies, they were originally developed in New Jersey in the late 1800s by two brothers, John and Thomas Black. Jersey Giants were the original

“commercial” meat chicken bred to replace the turkey, which was the primary table bird at the time (doubtless because other breeds were too scrawny to provide a substantial meal, which we’ve found is true even now).

They come in three colors: Black, white, and “blue” (a bluish-slate-gray), along with some additional unofficial color variations. On average, the black birds tend to outweigh the white by about a pound. As a breed, we’ve found them to be excellent layers and very prone to broodiness. Additionally, they’re extremely docile and friendly. Believe me, no one would continue to breed birds of that size if they had a mean streak in them!

The hens are larger than your standard Rhode Island Red, but not freakishly so. However, the mature rooster, while not quite equal to a turkey in size, certainly provides enough meat to feed a family.

Jersey Giants have a reputation for growing more slowly than other chicken breeds. In fact, they grow at the same pace; it’s just that they have further to go to reach their full size of 11 to 15 pounds. They tend to achieve their large frame first, then put on weight later. Since roosters take about nine months to achieve maximum weight, their feed-to-weight conversion is considered poor. While this may



Jersey Giant hen with newly hatched chicks.



Jersey Giant rooster.

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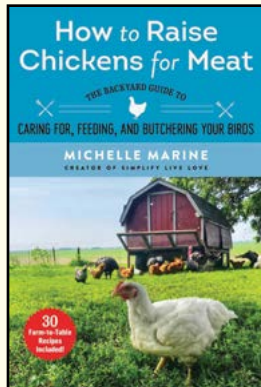
be a factor for commercial enterprises, it's not as important on a homestead. Allowing the birds to free-range and giving them access to a compost pile will help mitigate feed costs.

Since the weight of a dressed (butchered) chicken is about 75% of live weight, a mature Jersey Giant rooster of 11 to 15 pounds will dress out to between 8.25 pounds and 11.25 pounds at butchering. While this doesn't approach commercial turkeys in final weight, it's a vast improvement over the typical "dual-purpose" chicken.

Jersey Giants are considered a heritage breed, which has several benefits: They reproduce and maintain their genetic qualities through natural mating; they have a long, productive outdoor lifespan; and their



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slow growth rate means their skeletal structure, organs, and muscle mass develop in a healthy manner.

Pros and Cons

The biggest benefits of Jersey Giants are:

- They make a table bird of suitable size for a family.
- They're reasonably cold-hardy, although they're prone to frostbite on their combs in bitterly cold weather (consider installing a coop heater under such conditions).
- Since the hens go broody easily, a flock is sustainable. New birds can be raised to replace older birds.
- They're not prone to health issues.
- The hens are excellent layers.

The biggest flaws of Jersey Giants are:

- Slower maturity for roosters destined to become meat birds.
- Not suitable for small yards. Because of their larger size, Jersey Giants require room to roam. They thrive in larger spaces and free-range opportunities.
- They require larger coops proportioned to their size. They benefit from lower roosting bars (since they have difficulty flying up to higher bars), larger nest boxes, and larger doors for outside access.
- Their dark feathers can leave dark pinfeathers on a plucked bird after butchering. Raising white Jersey Giants will eliminate this issue.
- Roosters, due to their large size, can be a bit tough on the hens. We had a few bald ladies with bare backs until the boys got into their stride. We haven't found the roosters to be aggressive toward people.
- They require proportionately more feed, which can be offset by allowing them to free-range.
- They tend to go broody. While this is a benefit for most homesteaders, some backyard enthusiasts aren't prepared to handle broody hens or baby chicks.
- They don't handle heat well due to their large size and feather density. If you live in a very hot climate, make sure adequate shade and cooling options are offered or select a different breed.

For those wanting an excellent all-around (and truly dual-purpose) backyard chicken, the Jersey Giant is well worth considering. ●

PATRICE LEWIS lives on a small homestead in North Idaho. A wife, mother, author, blogger, columnist, and speaker, she's practiced and written about rural subjects for over 30 years. Patrice enjoys self-sufficiency projects such as animal husbandry, small-scale dairy production, garden and food preservation.



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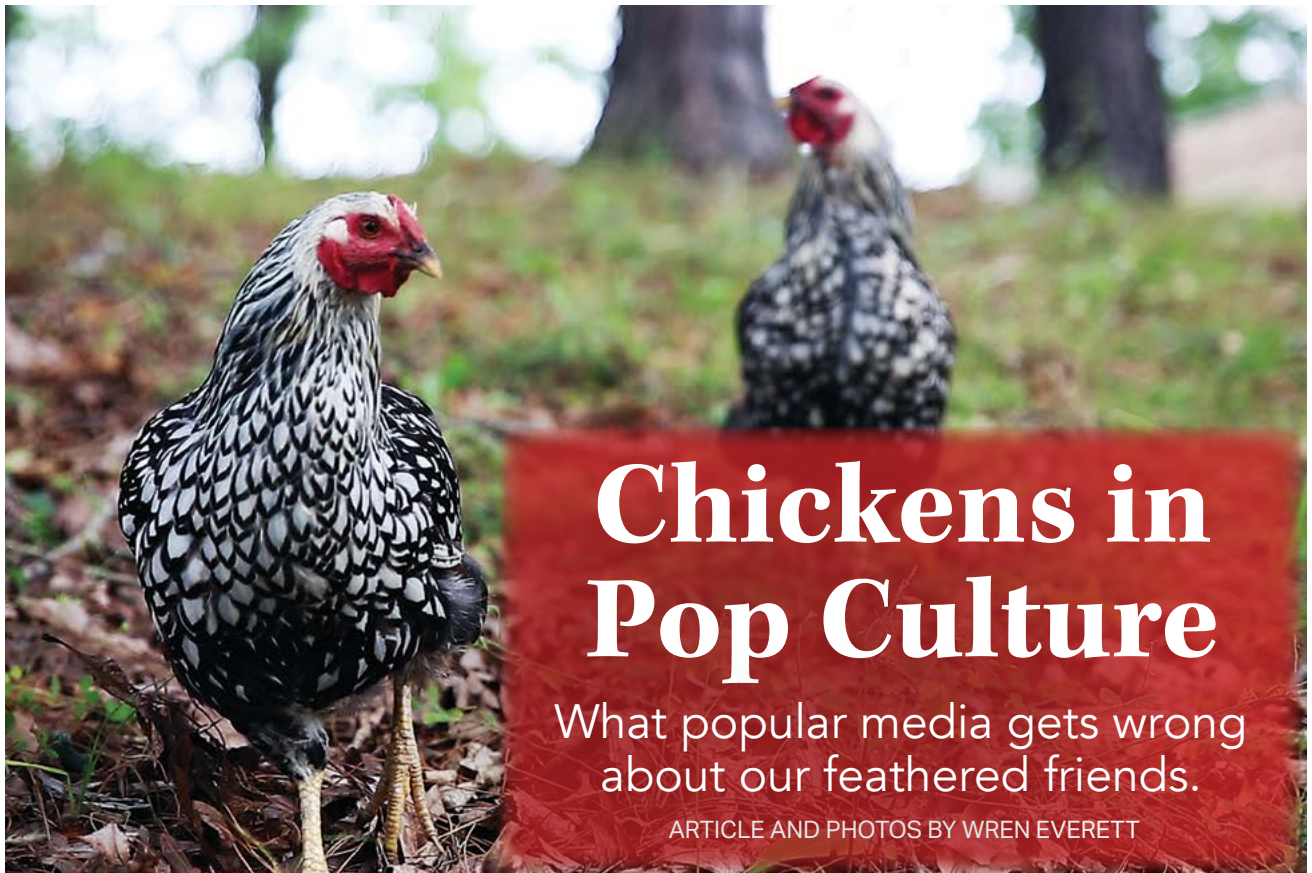


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Chickens in Pop Culture

What popular media gets wrong about our feathered friends.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY WREN EVERETT

Wyandottes looking picturesque.

Chickens have been

a part of history for a long time—thousands of years, in fact. They scratched and pecked the grounds of Roman villas, the streets of ancient Jerusalem, old Egyptian marketplaces, and the humid jungles of their ancestral Indonesian origins. They traveled with the original homesteaders as they moved west, they traveled with the back-to-the-landers as they moved out of the cities, and they occupy modern coops and barnyards throughout the world. They're a part of every farm-themed playset and every animal-themed coloring book, and have become a symbol of everything rural and rustic.

With all of our millennia of shared history, you'd think that

humans would understand chickens near-perfectly by this point. But if you take a look at the way chickens are portrayed in pop culture, you'd see that it's anything but true. The chickens that appear in animation, video games, and television shows often bear little resemblance to their flesh-and-feather counterparts.

That's how it goes, though. Just as doctors probably have a hard time watching medical dramas, and police officers probably wince at the sloppy procedures in cop shows, we chicken keepers know when the chickens in our pop culture aren't doing what chickens actually do. So let's explore some of the bizarre ways chickens are misrepresented and share a chuckle in solidarity.

Things Pop Culture Gets Wrong About Chickens

Roosters Only Crow at Dawn

It's early morning, and the eastern sky has begun to lighten. Edvard Grieg's "Morning Mood" gently fills the air. The farm's rooster emerges in the pre-dawn light and proudly summits the barn. With a deep breath, he lets loose a clear crow in the tradition of every chanticleer that preceded him—the clarion call that only comes to rouse the rest of the barnyard for a new day.

I imagine folks who don't keep roosters think that the above paragraph is pretty spot-on. All of us who've kept a rooster, however, know that the paragraph above is quite incomplete.

Crowing is a distinctly male activity, and one that's first triggered by hormonal fluctuations as a rooster reaches sexual maturity.

A young rooster may crow at any hour of the night due to the fact that he's awash in hormones and needs to let off some manly steam. Roosters also crow in response to light—just like all the (somewhat quieter) songbirds do as the sun rises past the horizon. A midnight crow may be in response, therefore, to the bright light of a full moon shining through the coop. Crowing is also used to establish dominance, which is why your rooster may have a crow-off with your neighbor's rooster, or after anything (real or imagined) has happened that's ruffled his dignity.

It all boils down to the fact that a rooster might possibly crow at any hour of the day, including, but not limited to, dawn.

Chickens Lay Eggs Lying Down

Every cartoon I've ever seen that shows a chicken laying an egg shows the exact same thing—a bird, snugly bedded down in a soft hay nest, quietly resting until an egg just pops from some mysterious portal directly beneath her. Sometimes, the hen even looks surprised at what's happened.

Some of us may hold this rather inaccurate image of egg-production well into adulthood. The first year I ever kept chickens, I did it as a total novice, having never kept any bird before. Imagine my shock when, for the first time, I actually saw one of my chickens actively laying an egg. And I do mean actively—at the moment of actual egg production, she was standing and straining until the new egg emerged from her vent and fell a considerable few inches to the nesting box below her. Then, after all the effort was expended, she settled back down over the egg. Egg laying may look placid, but that's

because the hen has to prepare for the event and rest afterward.

Chickens Are Out At Night

One of the biggest misunderstandings in video games, movies, and children's shows is the simple fact that chickens are diurnal. As in, they're awake during the day and totally shut down at night.

It doesn't matter if it's a space-fantasy, such as *Destiny 2*, or an extremely well-researched historical video game like the 14th-century Bavaria of *Kingdom Come* or the 1880s Wild West of *Red Dead Redemption 2*; their chickens are out both day and night. I've even seen historical or rural-themed TV shows that used a night filter to make daytime filming appear as if it was night, but forgot to take

the chickens off the set! Those Hollywood birds continued scratching and pecking in the bright sunlight of reality, none the wiser that they'd become the mythical "night chicken" in post-production.

It seems that most media producers and developers didn't grow up with a feathery flock in their own backyards. Because, as anyone who keeps chickens knows, these diurnal birds go to sleep as soon as the sun goes down. They roost, still and quiet, until the sun welcomes them back to wakefulness. At night, chickens are extremely prone to predators for this reason: They basically just turn off (this is good news for any chicken keeper who wants to clip wings, trim rooster spurs, or do any other business to otherwise flighty birds).

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Chicks Hatch as Dry, Fluffy Baby Birds

If you've seen it once, you've probably seen it a hundred times. When a baby bird hatches in a child's cartoon, the egg cracks, two feet kick out, and then an adorably big-eyed baby bird emerges from the shell (usually wearing some of it as a hat). It's perfectly dry, fluffy, and ready for adventures.

Birds hatch in one of two ways. Altricial chicks, such as songbirds, hatch underdeveloped and are nest-bound. Ground-dwelling birds, such as chickens, often hatch as precocial chicks and are developed enough that they have a covering of feathers and walk within a day or so of hatching. There's a family of chicken-like birds known as megapodes that hatch as superprecocial chicks—the most well-developed of any bird species. These chicks hatch from the shell as coordinated, independent chicks with full wing feathers—some species fly on the day they hatch!

No matter how developed they are or aren't, however, all birds that hatch—including megapodes—emerge from the shell gooey and wet. The inaccuracy in popular culture is understandable—a slimy, newly-hatched bird is anything but fluffy and cute. This “unappealing” dampness, however, is crucial for their survival, as anyone who uses an incubator knows—to dry out in the shell is fatal.

Chickens Are Homicidal!

This one's a weird one, but surprisingly ubiquitous in video games as a joke. While the thought of a seemingly innocuous bird soundly trouncing a full-grown man in a fight is a funny image, I imagine the joke's consistency is a homage to the iconic “cucco” of the *Legend of Zelda* franchise. In the *Zelda* series, these Leghorn-like chickens seem harmless enough, but if you were to be so foolish as to strike one with

your sword, you'd suddenly and inescapably become the recipient of an unrelentingly deadly avian attack.

I've seen chickens with murderous tendencies show up in the *Assassin's Creed* series, in the *Yakuza* series, *Wasteland 2*, and several *Pokémon*-type games, where they appear as a preposterously pugilistic ally to fight alongside the player character.

Now, everyone may know a story about a rooster with a bad temper, but when it comes to human-chicken relations, the situation is usually pretty amicable. As prey animals, a chicken is far more likely to run away from harm than step into it. Their fighting nature is most often turned against their own kind.

Reality Gets It Right

Though our culture's collective media might have a warped view of our favorite birds, we can form our own opinions from our own feathery friends in our own flocks. There, our day-loving birds faithfully crow through the day or faithfully lay eggs, hatch from those eggs, and don't harbor a murderous thought in their little minds toward their keepers (with the exception of some roosters). Thankfully, those who actually keep chickens don't have to use pop culture to understand them. ●



Despite the portrayal in games, chickens usually don't turn murderous.

WREN EVERETT and her husband quit their teaching jobs in the city and moved back to their land on 12 acres in the Ozarks. There, they're learning to live as modern peasants: off-grid, as self-sufficient as possible, and quite happily.



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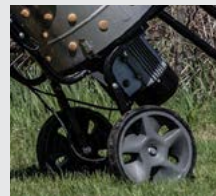
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THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF THERAPY CHICKENS

Chickens are soul-soothing for old and young alike.

BY PATRICE LEWIS

The famous nurse

Florence Nightingale first wrote about pet therapy in 1859. She noticed patients with chronic illness felt better when they had an animal by their side. Since then, endless studies have confirmed that animal-assisted therapy has a measurable

positive effect, relieving stress, reducing anxiety, and providing comfort, both for those with and without clinical conditions.

In the world of therapy animals, most people are familiar with dogs, goats, cats, llamas, and even horses. But there's

a new contender in providing benefits for the sick or elderly: therapy chickens.

Anyone who's spent time with their backyard flock knows that watching and interacting with chickens can be calming and reduce stress. It's a natural leap to conclude that chickens would make suitable therapy animals.

The presence of poultry is particularly effective for those suffering from anxiety and depression associated with dementia.

Can You Certify a Therapy Chicken?

Most organizations that certify therapy animals are reluctant to consider birds — especially chickens — because, while there are exceptions, mammals have a certain trainability that birds may lack.

In fact, for liability and insurance purposes, officially certifying chickens as therapy animals is difficult because the species lacks a substantial body of research indicating that chickens can be successful as therapy animals. "Domesticated farm animals, including chickens, aren't currently eligible for registration as therapy animals," says Jesse Haas, national director of programs with Pet Partners (www.PetPartners.org), the nation's oldest and most trusted organization for pet therapy standards. "Without research to



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document their behavior over time, we can't evaluate their predictability and reaction to stress."

That research is necessary to document the species' behavior over time in various demanding environments. Often, according to Intermountain Therapy Animals, what's lacking is a licensed evaluator familiar enough with chickens to assess whether they're truly enjoying their interactions with humans.

Unofficial Therapy Chickens

However, unofficial therapy programs are a different matter, as many enterprising people are discovering. Individual facilities (nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, etc.) may be wide open to the idea of chickens as therapy animals.

In the case of Healing Hens of Texas (www.HealingHensofTX.org), the founder started bringing chickens—specifically

Silkies—into senior residential facilities. At first, the hens were mere visitors. Now they have permanent placements at several facilities, allowing residents the opportunity to visit the birds whenever they like. One facility manager termed the chickens "heart medicine" and therapeutic for patients' minds.

Therapy Chickens and Senior Homes

In Australia, an organization that runs nearly 20 senior care homes began exploring alternative means to improve residents' quality of life. At one facility, a pilot program involving chickens was so successful that the organization is implementing "chooks" (as they call chickens) at the rest of the homes. The presence of poultry is particularly effective for those suffering from anxiety and depression associated with dementia.

In some senior care facilities, special chicken enclosures are built with wheelchair-accessible entrances so residents can sit among the chickens and soak in their activities. If their mobility permits, residents can gather eggs and assist with the chickens' daily care. Therapy chickens are proving especially helpful for seniors because so many older people grew up on farms.

Why and How do Chickens Help?

The scientific reasons why animal therapy leads to such positive effects are still being investigated. Animal therapy stimulates the body's endorphins (the "feel-good" hormones) and reduces the level of stress hormones such as cortisol, norepinephrine, and epinephrine. Being around animals provides an oxytocin rush, which in turn

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photos, and amusing anecdotes. Featuring charming chicken-themed art borders, every page invites users to chronicle an aspect of their chickens' lives, beginning with chicks and progressing to laying hen or rooster to flock elder. Spaces are allocated for recording amusing anecdotes and practical information about the selected breeds, health care, flock dynamics, and individual chicken names and personalities. The hardcover format features an egg-shaped die-cut cover that every owner can customize with a portrait of one of their feathered friends, making it a perfect gift for any backyard chicken enthusiast. **Item #11922, \$16.00**

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drives down stress physiology. When patients aren't stressed, they deal with pain better. Animal therapy can take the form of offering a distraction from chronic symptoms or a place to practice social interactions.

Additionally, unconditional, non-judgmental animals can provide people with a safe space to process emotions or try new tasks. Oddly, psychologists have found that while people are more likely to talk to therapy animals, they're also more likely to talk with each other in the presence of animals. In the case of on-site chicken coops, therapy hens allow patients to get outside more, which also has a beneficial effect.

Beyond Senior Homes

Chickens assist more than just the elderly. Prisoners, those with disabilities, people overcoming abuse, those with mental health challenges, and people with many other stressful or disabling conditions can benefit from interactions with chickens. In some programs, people who've been abused are paired with chickens that have also been abused. This offers tremendous benefits for both species as the healing hens help heal the humans.

Some organizations provide calm, docile birds to in-home patients, including children with special needs and seniors. They help combat social isolation and loneliness in older people, and reportedly decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression, particularly for patients with dementia.

What Does It Take to be a Therapy Chicken?

As with any therapy animal, therapy chickens must be calm, unruffled, sweet-tempered, and docile. Certain breeds (such as Silkies, Orpingtons, and Cochins) have a better disposition for this purpose, though individual birds from any breed are suitable if they show exceptional gentleness. For obvious reasons, roosters generally aren't considered as candidates.

Any therapy animal must be properly raised and handled. Getting the birds used to the trainer is one thing, but getting them used to other people, as well as varying circumstances, can be trickier. Can a chicken be calm around other animals (dogs, cats), sudden movements, or small children? Does it get spooked by loud noises? A therapy animal that acts out under stressful conditions isn't just annoying or dangerous; it can be a legal liability.



a chair and sit among your own backyard poultry — watching them cluck, scratch, take dust baths, or even sit in your lap — to understand why. ●



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Therapy in Its Many Forms

Despite the myriad benefits, chickens don't offer actual "therapy." Instead, mingling with, caring for, or engaging in activities with chickens are considered "animal-assisted interventions."

According to US Service Animals, "The laws surrounding chicken therapy are complicated, and there are local laws and federal regulations to consider. Federal law describes a service animal as one that can be trained individually to perform tasks for someone with a disability. Chickens can't be classed as service animals but can still be a therapy pet or Emotional Support Animal (ESA) if they assist with a defined need. Therapy fowl can be registered as an ESA."

Whether officially or unofficially, there's no question that chickens are being used more frequently in rehabilitative settings. All you have to do is take

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DUCKS VS. DUCKLINGS

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY ERIN SNYDER



Ducklings imprint at a young age and build a lifelong bond with their human family.

It's spring, the time of year when duck owners are thinking of expanding their flocks. Before you rush to place an order at the hatchery or browse listings for some irresistible quackers, check out these pros, cons, and tips I've learned along the way.

Ducklings Pros

In the 18 years that my family has been raising ducks, we've almost always expanded our flock with ducklings. However, if you're unsure if baby ducks are a good fit for your flock, here are a few pros.

Friendly Pets

Since ducklings imprint (meaning they believe the first face they see is their mother),

our ducklings bond closely to us, creating a lifelong attachment.

Another advantage to getting our ducklings used to being handled from a young age is that it makes them easier to handle and work with should they become sick or hurt.

Experience Tip: For an ultra-friendly flock, handle both ducklings and adult birds daily.

Better Nutrition

One of the perks of raising ducklings is that we can control what they eat. Feeding our flocks a healthy diet is extremely important to us, as ducklings raised on chick feed without added nutrients can have significant health problems throughout their adult life.

Ensuring proper nutrition benefits not only the birds but also you. Ducks are what they eat, and their nutrition, whether good or bad, is passed through to the consumer via their eggs and meat.

Experience Tip: Ducklings require 55 to 70 milligrams of niacin per kilogram of feed. Adding brewer's yeast to the diet is a good way to ensure your flock is receiving enough niacin to grow strong and healthy.

Flock Integration Made Easy

Our flock is less wary of new flock members if the newest arrivals were raised alongside the adults.

When the 8-week-old ducklings are ready to join the rest of the flock, our older females take them under their wings, and the two flocks quickly become good friends.

Experience Tip: When integrating young ducks into the flock, be sure to keep a close eye on the drake(s), as some males tend to bully younger flock members. When this happens, we separate the problem boy from the flock until the female ducklings have reached the point of lay before reintroducing them to the drake.

Duckling Cons

While there are many pros to raising ducklings, there are also a few cons to bear in mind.

Messy Brooder

A messy brooder is one of the biggest downsides to ducklings. These inquisitive little cuties splash through their water fountains and make everything in their path soggy. Their love of water can be a disadvantage for those brooding ducklings indoors.

Experience Tip: To keep brooder messes to a minimum, we raise ducklings during the warmer months, when they can go outside in a small, duckling-friendly, completely predator-proofed run during the day.

Shipping Woes

Sadly, ducklings shipped through the mail may be dead on arrival. While hatcheries have found ways to reduce the number of deaths, be sure to take a peek inside the box before allowing your kids a glimpse of the new arrivals.

Experience Tip: Always open the box inside the post office so you can report any casualties to both the post office and the hatchery.

Adult Duck Pros

If you're unsure about taking on ducklings, here are a few pros and cons we've learned when acquiring adult ducks.

Guaranteed Sexing

As long as you know how to tell a female duck from a male, the top pro to purchasing an adult is the guarantee of getting exactly what you want. Except for Muscovies, females have loud quacks, while drakes have soft, raspy voices.

Experience Tip: Acquiring an adult female can come in handy, especially if you have a lonely widower drake in need of some female company.



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Acquiring adult ducks is the best way to ensure you receive females.

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Faster Production

Acquiring adult females is a good way to cut costs if egg production is your main focus. Most lay from late winter through early fall, so be sure to purchase females during this time if you want to get eggs right away.

Experience Tip: When new females arrive, it's not uncommon for their production rate to drop or even cease for a few weeks until they become comfortable in their new home.

No Shipping Worries

While you can ship adult ducks through the mail, most flock owners prefer to buy from someone within driving distance. One of the perks of purchasing ducks from someone close by is that you don't need to worry about how they'll fare during the shipping process.

Experience Tip: An enclosed crate or carrier works better than a cardboard box for transporting.

Adult Ducks Cons

Before you decide that adult ducks are the way to go, here are a few cons you should consider.

Pecking Order Issues

Integrating adults into our existing flock rarely goes smoothly. The flock members are often less than pleased when forced to interact with the new arrivals, and aren't afraid to express their opinion, including engaging in physical battles.

Experience Tip: To prevent injuries, keep meet-and-greets between the two flocks short and sweet. Never introduce a single duck (unless the new duck is

being introduced to one duck only, in the case of a pair), and don't hesitate to step in and interfere if battles become too rough.

Biosecurity Concerns

My greatest concern when introducing adults to our flock is biosecurity. We prefer to keep a closed flock (meaning we rarely acquire adult poultry) to help reduce disease risks.

Ducks can carry many diseases, including internal and external parasites, the avian flu, Newcastle disease, bacteria, and other common health risks.

Experience Tip: Before being introduced to your flock, new adult arrivals should be vet checked and complete a strict 30-day quarantine period to ensure they're healthy.

Rewarding Either Way

Whether you choose to raise ducklings or purchase adult ducks, adding some new members to your flock is a rewarding experience. ●

ERIN SNYDER and her family have raised chickens and ducks for nearly two decades. She's passionate about all things poultry but is especially interested in poultry nutrition, predator protection, egg-laying disorders, and helping chickens live their best lives well into their golden years. You can follow her chicken adventures on her newly hatched Instagram page: www.Instagram.com/thehenhousehygge

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Can't Touch This!

Meet the feathered guardians of the Cold War.

BY MARK HALL



On a dark, foggy night in 1986, you're walking through a remote part of West Germany. Ahead looms an obscure building that can barely be seen, but you know what it is. You've been secretly inquiring into its contents for some time. As a spy, you've been paid by the Soviet KGB to find the European Air Defense installations, which are purported to be spread across Western Europe, and this is the first one you've found.

You're amazed to discover that no one seems to be guarding it. With a measure of optimism, you continue forward, now quickening your pace. This will be the night you actually approach the building, you decide. However, as you slide the ultra-slim super-spy camera out of your coat pocket, the silence is suddenly shattered by loud honking sounds coming from all directions. Startled, you drop your camera, and for a moment,

you're frozen with fear as a terrifying sight is revealed.

Out of the fog, several crazed geese materialize, each with wild eyes and an open, menacing beak. Under attack from all sides, you forget about your camera and run away in terror. Frightfully, they're right at your heels, belting out their shrill sirens and beating you with their huge outspread wings.

Soon, they quit the chase and return to their post. Moments later, you stop running and crouch behind some shrubs to hide and catch your breath. You're amazed at what just happened. "Since when has the U.S. military used geese, of all things, to guard anything?" you wonder. Then you reach into your empty pocket to retrieve your camera, only to be mortified to remember that you dropped it next to the crazy geese. You should go back and look for it, but you're not willing to repeat that harrowing experience. Besides, you're now beginning to hear voices shouting, and you run away breathlessly into the night, narrowly escaping capture. This is the kind of rough treatment any unauthorized person could've expected to receive from these sensational Cold War sentries.



Military Guard Geese

To be sure, geese seem an unorthodox choice for guard duty. Nevertheless, their loud, alarming fierceness in the above scenario clarifies the reasoning behind such a move. In fact, geese have worked effectively in this capacity on several continents and over numerous centuries, going at least as far back as the Romans. Throughout their history, these highly irregular guard animals have fiercely protected temples, government property, and privately owned businesses.

One such business was the Ballantine whiskey distillery in Dumbuck, Scotland. In 1959, six geese were enlisted to protect several warehouses filled with maturing whiskey. Over the next several decades, the Scotch Watch, as they were called, expanded in number to a peak of more than 100 geese, ensuring that no human ever breached the Ballantine warehouse complex.

On an official visit to the Ballantine facilities, a U.S. soldier, Capt. David Thomas, was so impressed with the 'Watch' that the U.S. military acquired 18 geese and launched a successful pilot program to protect its military installations. Like those of the distillery, their keen hearing and sharp eyesight made these new guardians ideal for detecting intruders. They were highly economical to feed, eating only the grass grown on-site and some grain. In fact, the whole goose patrol cost the U.S. Army about half the annual tab for a single trained guard dog.

The trial run was indeed successful, and soon a total of 900 geese were ordered to locations across Western Europe. Companies consisting of 6 to 40 birds each were positioned at 30 sites run by the U.S. Army's 32nd Air Defense Command.



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PATRIOTIC POULTRY

Their assignment was to prevent radar systems, anti-aircraft, and communication equipment from falling into the wrong hands.

Throughout the late 1980s, the goose platoons continued to guard the U.S. military hardware



enthusiastically. However, improvements in security technology were underway, and the geese were slowly phased out. Before the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1991, they'd already been replaced entirely. Their successful mission was completed without any recorded encounters.

After 45 years, the Cold War had finally ended. With the fall of the Soviet Union, geopolitical and ideological tensions around the world eased tremendously. As for all those geese, I'm pretty sure their lives weren't much different in retirement than they'd been during their tour of duty. Somewhere, a curious cat wandered too near to the nest of a goose and had to be

frightened away. Somewhere else, an unsuspecting paperboy suddenly had to pedal away madly after encountering a gaggle hanging out by the road. Well, you get the idea. ●

MARK M. HALL lives with his wife, their three daughters, and numerous pets on a four-acre slice of paradise in rural Ohio. Mark is a veteran small-scale chicken farmer and an avid observer of nature. As a freelance writer, he endeavors to share his life experiences in a manner that is both informative and entertaining. You can find him at ThePoultryChronicles.com

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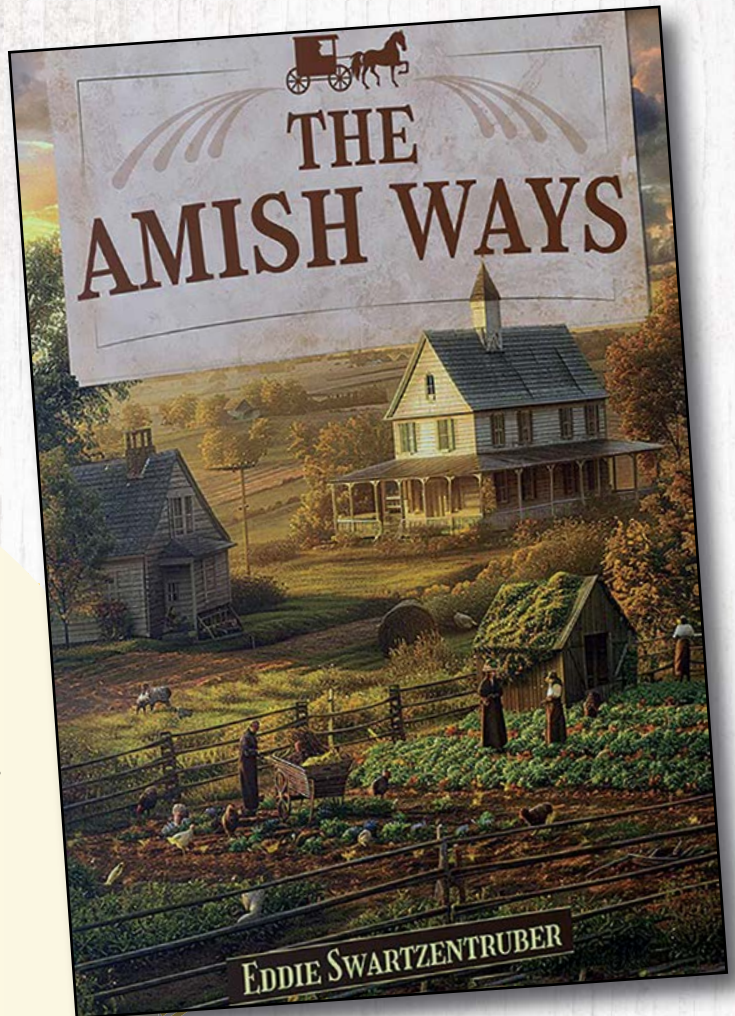
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2026 USDA RULE CHANGES

Rules that have been years in the making are shifting expectations.

BY KAREN KOPF, KOPF CANYON RANCH

Federal poultry policy

rarely feels like it touches the backyard keeper. Most small producers operate on a scale defined by trust, transparency, and hands-on care—far from the industrial systems that usually drive regulation. 2026 marks a turning point. Several USDA rules that've been years in the making are now entering active enforcement, and even small-flock owners will feel their impact, not as burdens, but as shifts in expectations, language, and

documentation that shape how poultry are raised, marketed, and understood in the United States. For backyard producers, this is the first time federal policy has meaningfully aligned with the practices they've upheld for years.

The changes fall into three broad categories: truth in labeling, animal welfare standards, and transparency in sourcing. Together, they create a landscape where small producers gain ground—because the practices they've long used are finally

being recognized and protected in policy. That recognition doesn't just validate their approach; it shifts the broader framework of poultry production toward the values small flocks have modeled for decades.

“Product of USA” Label Standards

The most visible change is an active enforcement standard for the voluntary U.S.-origin label claim. Finalized by the USDA on March 11, 2024, establishments



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had until January 1, 2026, to comply with the new rule, which states that poultry can only claim “Product of USA” if the bird was born, raised, slaughtered, and processed entirely within the United States. For decades, imported poultry could be shipped here for minimal processing and still be marketed as domestic.

For backyard producers, this is more than a regulatory footnote. It’s a competitive advantage. Small-flock owners who hatch their own chicks or purchase from domestic hatcheries now have a label that accurately reflects the integrity of their work. Customers who value local food systems finally have a way to distinguish truly domestic poultry from imported supply chains.

The practical impact is simple: Anyone using the voluntary label must keep basic documentation—hatch dates, purchase receipts, and processing records. Most backyard keepers already track these details informally. Now, those habits will become part of a national standard that elevates the value of small-scale production.

Looking ahead, the USDA has indicated that its truth-in-labeling work will continue beyond 2026. The next area under discussion is claims verification—terms such as “no antibiotics,” “humane,” and “pasture raised.” While no formal rule exists yet, the agency has made clear that stronger substantiation requirements are coming. The documentation habits small producers build now will position them well for any refinement in the years ahead.

www.USDA.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2024/03/11/usda-finalizes-voluntary-product-usa-label-claim-enhance-consumer-protection

Updated Welfare Requirements

The Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards (OLPS) rule continues its rollout through 2026, strengthening expectations around indoor space, outdoor access, confinement limits, and humane handling. While the rule applies directly to certified organic operations, its influence extends far beyond them. It sets a benchmark for what consumers, inspectors, and state agencies increasingly view as responsible poultry care.

For backyard keepers, this shift is less about changing practices and more about recognizing them. The OLPS standards formalize what many small producers already do: provide meaningful outdoor access, maintain clean

and well-ventilated housing, and avoid unnecessary physical alterations. The rule’s emphasis on natural behaviors—dust bathing, scratching, wing



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stretching—aligns with the everyday practices of a small flock.

Where backyard keepers may need to adjust is in documentation. As welfare expectations become more explicit, the ability to show how birds are housed and managed becomes part of a producer’s credibility. A simple log of outdoor access or housing conditions can answer customer questions and align with the direction federal policy is moving.

Looking ahead, the USDA is expected to revisit outdoor access measurements and stocking-density refinements once OLPS implementation stabilizes. These discussions aren’t aimed at small flocks, but they’ll continue to shape consumers’ expectations for

welfare across every egg and bird they buy.

www.AMS.USDA.gov/rules-regulations/organic-livestock-and-poultry-standards

New Rules for Transparency in Sourcing

Another major change, which began in November 2023, finally arrives on July 1, 2026, when new transparency rules under the Packers and Stockyards Act take effect. These rules were designed to bring fairness to contract growers, but their effects extend to hatcheries and integrators—the large poultry companies that control breeding, feed, and chick supply— which may also supply backyard flocks.

For the first time, buyers will have access to clearer information about breeder practices, breed ratios, sourcing, and facility conditions. This means small flock owners can make more informed decisions about where their birds come from and what genetic or health histories they carry. It also means suppliers who’ve long relied on opaque practices will face pressure to improve or lose customers.

Backyard keepers gain something powerful here: leverage. When sourcing becomes transparent, quality becomes visible. Producers who prioritize healthy, well-bred birds will stand out, and small buyers will have the information they need to make responsible choices.

Looking ahead, the USDA has indicated that the 2026 transparency rule is only the first phase of a broader modernization of the Packers and Stockyards Act. Future phases may address unfair practices, contract clarity, and breeder-level transparency—changes that would further strengthen the information available to small flock owners when choosing suppliers.

www.USDA.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/01/14/usda-finalizes-third-new-regulation-under-biden-harris-administration-create-fairness-and

Verification for Raising Claims

The USDA is also sharpening its oversight of raising claims such as “free range” and “pasture raised.” The new expectation is straightforward: If a producer uses these terms, they must demonstrate that birds have meaningful daily outdoor access—not just a theoretical pop door or a few minutes outside.



For backyard keepers, this is another area where existing practices already align with the spirit of the rule. Most small flocks genuinely live the free-range or pasture-raised life. The shift is simply that producers must be prepared to show it. A quick note about outdoor hours or a photo of the setup can satisfy both regulators and customers.

The benefit is clarity. When claims are verified, the value of truly pasture-raised eggs and meat becomes more visible in the marketplace. Small producers who invest in outdoor access will finally see that effort recognized.

Looking ahead, the USDA is expected to move from guidance to formal rulemaking on raising claims. Standardized definitions, along with clearer expectations for documenting outdoor access, are likely to emerge. Backyard producers who already keep simple logs will be well-positioned for any future shifts.

www.FSIS.USDA.gov/inspection/compliance-guidance/labeling/basics-labeling

Food Safety and Disease Preparedness

The USDA's ongoing work to reduce salmonella in poultry products is still in development, but 2026 marks a year of active discussion and public meetings. While no new rule has been finalized at this writing, the direction is clear—future policies will likely touch flock management, sanitation, and processing standards.

For backyard keepers, this is a reminder — not a warning — that strong biosecurity and clean handling practices are becoming part of the national conversation. Those who already prioritize flock health will be well-positioned for whatever comes next.

The USDA has also strengthened indemnity requirements for flocks

affected by highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). Beginning in 2024 and continuing through 2026, producers must have a written biosecurity plan on file and be able to demonstrate compliance to qualify for reimbursement if their birds are culled as a result of a disease response.

Looking ahead, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is also exploring stronger national traceability systems in response to repeated HPAI outbreaks. While no poultry-specific proposal exists yet, future discussions at APHIS may include premises identification or documentation requirements for interstate movement—changes most likely to affect breeders who show birds or sell across state lines.

The Bottom Line for Small Producers

Taken together, these rules don't pull backyard keepers into the regulatory machinery of industrial agriculture. Instead, they elevate the values that small producers already embody: transparency, welfare, honesty, and traceability. The work ahead isn't about overhauling practices. It's about articulating them, keeping simple records, understanding the claims you use, and asking more from your suppliers.

In a year of regulatory change, small flock owners gain something rare: recognition. Standards for responsible poultry keeping aren't being set by industry, but instead shaped by practices backyard producers have long embraced. ●

KAREN KOPF tends a flock, a herd, a garden, and her business, Kopf Canyon Botanics. Follow her ranch life — feathers, fur, and foliage included — at Kopf Canyon Ranch on Facebook or at KikoGoats.org.

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EXTERNAL PARASITE CONTROL METHODS

The pros, cons, and practical considerations.

BY JACLYN DE CANDIO

External Parasites are

among the most common and frustrating health challenges in keeping poultry. Even well-managed flocks are likely to encounter quite a wide range of external parasites that are happy to make their home on your birds' skin, feathers, or scales.

Fortunately, we live in a time where there's an abundance of products and protocols to treat them, but it can also be a task to discern and separate fact from fiction.

Understanding the available control methods, along with their advantages and drawbacks, allows flock owners to make informed decisions. And best of all, they're customizable to your flock size, management style, and level of comfort with different products. No single solution fits every flock. What matters most is recognizing problems early and responding appropriately.

Most Common External Parasites

Before discussing treatment options, you'll need to understand what you're dealing with. Here's a quick list of the major parasites that can inhabit virtually all flocks.

- Northern fowl mites live on the bird full-time and reproduce quickly.



Dust bathing can help control parasites.

- Poultry lice spend their entire life cycle on the bird and feed on feathers and skin debris.
- Red mites (roost mites) hide in environmental cracks and crevices during the day and feed on birds at night.
- Scaly leg mites burrow beneath leg scales, causing thickening and irritation.
- Ticks and fleas may be introduced by wild birds or rodents.

Symptoms may include feather loss, decreased egg production, pale combs, weight loss, scabby legs, restless behavior at night, or visible crawling insects around the hens' vents or roosts.

Early detection makes treatment simpler. Heavy infestations are far more difficult to control.

Chemical and Synthetic Treatments

Permethrin Sprays and Dusts

Permethrin is one of the most widely used and effective insecticides for poultry and other livestock.

PROS

Permethrin is highly effective against both mites and lice and is fast-acting. It's available in a wide variety of formulations, including sprays, liquid concentrates, and dusts. It's probably one of the most affordable and easily accessible treatments with no mandatory withdrawal period.

CONS

Like all chemicals, it requires careful application and correct

dilution if purchased as a concentrate. You'll also need to treat both the birds and their environment. Re-treatment is often necessary in 7 to 10 days. If overused, it can create resistance in your local parasite populations.

Carbaryl (Sevin Dust)

Carbaryl was once commonly used on backyard flocks but has been restricted for use in food animals since 2010.

PROS

Carbaryl is effective against lice, mites, and most insects, and it's easy to apply as a dust. The original manufacturer did create a new product with different active ingredients (bifenthrin and zeta-cypermethrin), but these are still not recommended.

CONS

The biggest con is that this product is no longer an option for food animals. It has potential human safety concerns and a lifetime withdrawal period for eggs and meat.

Ivermectin (Off-Label Use)

Ivermectin is sometimes used off-label for poultry parasites, particularly mites. But doing so can only be done under the instruction of a licensed veterinarian who has an established relationship with your flock.

PROS

Ivermectin can treat both external and some internal parasites simultaneously. It can be applied topically or orally, depending on your vet's off-label guidelines.

CONS

This isn't FDA-approved for laying hens in the U.S., as there's no established egg withdrawal period. And again, it requires your veterinarian's approval

and adherence to the specific dosage, route of administration, and timeline. It's illegal to use ivermectin without a veterinarian's permission and instructions.

Natural and Alternative Treatments

Many backyard poultry owners prefer more natural or non-chemical methods. While some can support parasite management, they may not be as effective for physically killing all the parasites, especially if the infestation is severe.

Diatomaceous Earth (DE)

Food-grade diatomaceous earth is sometimes used in dust baths and in animal environments. An extremely fine, powdery substance composed of fossilized diatom remains (small aquatic organisms), DE is rich in silica. Essentially, this gives it a mechanical action against insects by cutting and dehydrating their exoskeletons. There's a lot of information, misinformation, and personal opinion about using this product for various parasitic control purposes.

PROS

One of the most appealing things about DE is that it's completely natural. It's also easily accessible at garden and feed stores and reasonably affordable. Easy to use,



Diatomaceous earth comes with pros and cons one should be aware of.

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DE can be spread directly on birds, on the premises, and added to dust baths, though this isn't the most recommended method.

CONS

While DE supporters cite all kinds of success stories, its actual effectiveness is debated. For severe infestations, while it can be supportive, it likely won't wipe out a population. Not to mention, it's also less effective on extremely small parasites such as mites. Because it's so fine and contains sharp particles, DE is an irritant to the lungs and upper respiratory tract, so it's not recommended for use in ways that allow direct inhalation (e.g., dust baths). While some swear by feeding it to get rid of internal parasites, there's no evidence that this is effective. On the contrary, it must be kept dry to function correctly on external parasites.

Natural Alternatives

Essential Oils and Herbal Sprays

Commercial and homemade sprays containing essential oils such as thyme, peppermint,

oregano, or eucalyptus are increasingly marketed for poultry.

PROS

Essential oils (EOs) and other herbal sprays are accessible, 100% natural solutions. Many of these tools work by repelling parasites with their scent, rendering live animals and the environment uninhabitable for them. One of the strongest cases for these treatments is that they don't carry a high risk of parasite resistance over time, so they can be used routinely.

CONS

While there's supportive research on the effectiveness of natural solutions, there's significant variability across different concentrations and administration routes. They can have varying side effects when overused—many EOs, such as peppermint oil, can cause irritation, rashes, and more when used in excess. They may be inadequate on their own for very heavy infestations, but can go a long way toward prevention.

Dust Baths and Environmental Management

Encouraging natural dust bathing and maintaining a clean coop environment are solid foundational steps to prevent and discourage active infestations. Regularly cleaning bedding, sealing cracks, replacing roost boards when necessary, and controlling rodents can significantly reduce parasite pressure.

PROS

Birds instinctively manage minor parasites by practicing natural behaviors. Having a place to dust themselves allows birds to clean themselves and discourage parasites from taking up residence. It's also low-cost, requiring only a run with a dusty patch or providing a bin with a stand and clean dirt.

CONS

Dust baths will only go so far if there's an established infestation moving through the flock. Immunocompromised, elderly, or very young birds are also more susceptible to harboring and attracting parasites, regardless of the environment. The area must also be kept very dry, and it doesn't eliminate or discourage parasites residing in the environment.

Responsible Management, Not Perfection

Remember, when it comes to parasites, the goal isn't perfection but responsible management. Regular flock checks, prompt action, and a balanced understanding of treatment options allow keepers to protect bird health while aligning with their management philosophy. Environmental control is essential regardless of the method chosen. ●



While dust bathing can help control parasites, it's unlikely to help if there's an infestation.

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SUMMER EATS AND TREATS

Cobb salad, homemade dressings, and quick-and-easy lemon pie are perfect for hot summer days.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY RITA HEIKENFELD

Summer on our

little patch of heaven in Southwestern Ohio means spending a good chunk of the day outdoors. Along with regular outdoor chores, there are large vegetable and herb gardens to tend.

During the season, a lot of our meals start in the gardens. For example, the Cobb salad I'm sharing is one of my go-to, most versatile protein-and fiber-packed suppers.

Along with the base of garden lettuces, the toppings include bacon, chicken, cheese, avocado, and olives. Fresh garden vegetables, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, and onions are a given.

Our "girls" (chickens) provide plenty of eggs to hard-boil and add as well.

You'll need a good dressing for the salad, and I've got three tasty ones. The first is a real basic vinaigrette. Made in a jam jar with pantry ingredients, it's simple and quick to make.

Blender Italian salad dressing is a family favorite with robust

flavors. It's better than anything you can buy.

Homemade ranch dressing? You've got it. Parsley from our herb garden adds taste and a pretty color.

Okay, we've got supper done. Now let's talk about dessert. Does lemon meringue pie sound summery and citrusy enough?

Make an easy, augmented box version that's been in my family for generations.

Piled high with golden meringue, this pie is a stunner and so yummy. I'm proud to share the recipe with you. Extra filling can be baked in oven-proof containers alongside.

I hope these recipes feed you well and give you a little extra time to enjoy summer!

Summer Cobb Salad

A sturdy iceberg is traditional for Cobb salad, but use what you like. A combo of romaine and iceberg is nice. As for ingredients, again, top with what you like.



Individual Cobb salad.



Tabletop Cobb salad with chicken and two dressings, Italian and ranch.

INGREDIENTS

Lettuce in bite-sized pieces: your choice, enough to make a substantial bottom layer

3 cups cooked chicken (or protein of choice), chopped

½ pound bacon, cooked and crumbled

3 hard-boiled eggs, sliced

Tomatoes: large, sliced; or grape or cherry tomatoes, halved

1 cup or so blue cheese, or your favorite crumbled or shredded cheese

½ small red onion, thinly sliced

1 avocado, peeled, pitted, and thinly sliced or diced (coat with lemon juice to prevent darkening)

1 cucumber, sliced or diced

Olives — however many you want

INSTRUCTIONS

Make a layer of lettuce on the bottom of a platter, plate, or totable container.

Make neat rows of chosen ingredients for toppings.

Dress right before serving or let folks dress their own.

Jam Jar Vinaigrette

Jam and canning jars make great containers for salad dressings.

If you want a citrusy flavor, swap out half the vinegar for lemon or lime juice. And if you're using a jam jar that has a bit of jam on the bottom, leave it in!

INGREDIENTS

⅓ cup white wine vinegar

Dijon mustard or country mustard to taste — start with 2 teaspoons

1 tablespoon honey, local if possible

½ cup or so olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Put everything but salt and pepper into a jar.

Cover and shake.

Add salt and pepper to taste.

Store in the refrigerator and shake before using.

Blender Italian Salad Dressing

If you don't have a blender, no worries. Just shake everything up in a jar or whisk in a bowl. Dressing won't be as smooth as blended dressing, but it will still be yummy.

INGREDIENTS

1 small clove garlic, minced

¾ cup vegetable oil

¼ cup white wine vinegar or clear vinegar

3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, grated

Honey to taste — start with ½ teaspoon

½ teaspoon dried oregano

⅛ to ¼ teaspoon dry mustard

Several sprigs of parsley, stems removed

Salt and pepper to taste

A dash of hot pepper sauce, optional



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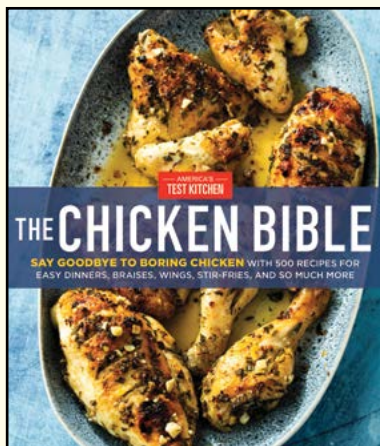
INSTRUCTIONS

Whirl everything but salt and pepper in a blender until smooth. Add salt and pepper.

Store in refrigerator and shake before using.



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Ranch Dressing

Go by taste on ingredients. Let dressing sit at room temperature, then taste.

If you like a smooth dressing, give it a whirl in a blender.

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 3/4 to 1 teaspoon dried dill weed
- Several parsley sprigs, stems removed and minced
- 2 teaspoons fresh chives, chopped, or 1/2 teaspoon dried
- 1/4 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Lemon juice to taste — start with a couple of teaspoons

INSTRUCTIONS

Whisk together all ingredients, or pour into a jar, cover, and shake.

Store in the refrigerator and shake before using.

Almost From Scratch Lemon Meringue Pie

The lemon juice and extra yolk give the filling a silky, lemony flavor.

If you prefer not to top it with meringue, freeze the whites for another use and dollop whipped cream on the pie.

INGREDIENTS

- Pie**
- 1 baked pie crust

Filling

1 box, 2.9 ounces, cook and serve (not instant) lemon pudding

Meringue

- 3 large egg whites, room temperature
- 1/4 teaspoon of tartar (stabilizes the whites — can use lemon juice)
- 1/4 cup sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

Filling

Follow the directions on the box for cooking the filling, adding an extra egg yolk and replacing 1/4 cup of water with 1/4 cup lemon juice.

Pour warm filling into baked pie crust.



Lemon meringue pie.



Extra filling — make lemon meringue pudding in oven-proof bowls.

Meringue

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Place whites in a bowl. Add cream of tartar, then beat on high speed just until whites form soft peaks. Meringue will look a bit foamy.

Add sugar gradually, beating until whites form stiff peaks and the sugar is dissolved.

Spoon meringue on top of warm filling. Start on the outside, making sure all edges are covered with meringue.

Bake 15 to 18 minutes until the meringue is cooked through and golden brown.

Let cool to room temperature for an hour, then refrigerate for 2 hours or so until the filling sets.

Store leftovers in the refrigerator.

Tip

Separate eggs while still cold. Don't get even a speck of yolk in the whites. The fat in the yolks will prevent good volume. ●

RITA HEIKENFELD comes from a family of wise women in tune with nature. She's a certified modern herbalist, culinary educator, author, and national media personality. Most importantly, she's a wife, mom, and grandma. Rita lives on a little patch of heaven overlooking the East Fork River in Clermont County, Ohio. She's a former adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati, where she developed a comprehensive herbal course.

AboutEating.com column: rita@communitypress.com



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LEMON CUSTARD PIE

A cool, sweet treat that's perfect for summer.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY AUDRA TROSPER

A few years ago, I decided I wanted to try Key lime pie. I'd heard of it, and for awhile, everything seemed to be Key lime pie-flavored, and it made me curious. I know, what does Key lime pie have to do with lemon custard pie? It was the desire for the first pie that led me down the path to the latter pie. So, I hunted down a recipe and made one—but it didn't quite hit the mark. I wasn't sure why, but maybe it was the recipe. I tried another recipe, and then another. Perhaps it was the Key lime? I tried regular limes. Sadly, I just couldn't get myself to like the flavor of either type of lime in a pie. A drink? Yes. But not a pie. As far as my family, some didn't care for the pies at all, and some were okay with them, but said neither lime pie was something they would seek out.

While I didn't like the flavor, I loved the texture. I wanted that, but not in lime. Lemon, though, I have a weakness for just about

anything lemon. And so began my quest for the perfect creamy, lemon custard.

Since my flock of chickens gives me plenty of eggs to play with, I started creating a recipe that would have a rich, smooth custard texture, but with all of the lemon flavor I loved. After some experimentation, which involved multiple pies and multiple iterations of my developing recipe, I finally had what I'd been hoping for. It was wonderfully sweet, tangy, lemony goodness with a delicious graham cracker crust. Everyone loved it, and it's become a summer staple in the house. It's easy, and that sweet-and-tart lemon flavor, combined with cold, creamy custard and whipped cream topping, is perfect on a hot summer day.

My ingredients are first in weights simply because it's so much easier when I'm baking to use weights. It creates fewer dishes and less mess. And since my deep love of cooking and

baking doesn't extend to washing dishes, that's always a win in my book. I also use real butter and vanilla. I never use margarine or imitation vanilla; I have no idea how that would turn out, so use it at your own risk.



Cool, creamy, and perfect for a summer day.

Lemon Custard Pie

Crust

INGREDIENTS

85 grams salted butter (6 tablespoons)

180 grams crushed graham crackers (I used a food processor to reduce mine into crumbs) (1½ cups)

65 grams sugar (⅓ cup)

10 grams brown sugar (¾ tablespoon)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees F and set the butter to melt.

Mix the crushed graham crackers and sugars together.

Add the melted butter and mix until everything is well moistened.

Press into a 9-inch, deep-dish pie pan or a 9-inch tart pan with a removable bottom (my preference) until it covers the bottom and the sides to the top.

Bake for 10 minutes, then remove from the oven and let it cool. Once it's room temperature, you can start the filling.



Baked crust.

DIRECTIONS

Pour the sweetened condensed milk into a mixing bowl, add eggs and egg yolks, and whisk to combine. Then whisk in lemon juice and lemon zest until fully combined. Immediately pour into the crust and place in a 350-degree oven.

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until the top is set. The pie should still jiggle when you move it.

Remove from the oven and let it cool for about 3 hours, then move it to the refrigerator and chill overnight.

Serve with whipped cream.

Whipped Cream Topping

INGREDIENTS

480 grams heavy whipping cream (not half and half!) (2 cups)

55 grams powdered sugar (½ cup)

4 grams vanilla (1 teaspoon)

Pinch of salt

DIRECTIONS

First, place a metal mixing bowl into the refrigerator and let it chill for 20 to 30 minutes. Make sure your cream is also good and cold.

Pour the heavy whipping cream into the chilled bowl along with the powdered sugar, vanilla, and pinch of salt.

Whip with the whisk attachment on a hand mixer or stand mixer until stiff peaks form.

Top pie and enjoy.

Tip

If you want your whipped topping to stay fluffy and pretty for longer than a few hours, before you get the mixing bowl and cream out of the refrigerator, mix 2.5 grams (1 teaspoon) unflavored gelatin with 22.5 grams (1½ tablespoons) cold water. Let it sit for 30 seconds. Then microwave for 8 seconds to melt it. Remove from the microwave and let it cool on the counter while you start the whipped cream.

Mix in just as soft peaks begin to form, then continue whipping until stiff peaks form. ●

AUDRA TROSPER is an editor, fiction writer, chicken herder, goat spoiler, gardener, and book hoarder who loves to cook and bake. www.ADTrospers.com

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Note

Don't start the filling until you're ready to put it into the shell. The lemon juice will denature the proteins in the eggs if left together too long before going into the oven.

Filling

INGREDIENTS

793 grams of sweetened condensed milk (2 cans)

3 large eggs

3 large egg yolks

238 grams lemon juice (1 cup)

10 grams lemon zest (1 tablespoon)



BREED PROFILE:

POLISH GREEN-LEGGED PARTRIDGE CHICKEN

BY DOUG OTTINGER

Across the countryside of Poland many years ago, a landrace variety of chicken known as *Zielononozka Kuropatwiana*, or Green-legged Partridge, was found on many farms. Named for their unique olive-green shanks, this breed is estimated to have once comprised more than 10% of all chickens raised in Poland. A once-common landrace fowl, the Green-legged Partridge developed its own treasure trove of genetic material through natural selection and breeding. The fowl were known to be hardy, independent, and able to forage for most of their own food. They were highly valued not only for their egg-laying ability (reportedly 150 to 180 eggs per year) but also for their high-quality meat production.

Ironically, the breed's independence and ability to survive without intensive human intervention, traits once considered valuable and necessary, were also the factors that led to the birds falling out of favor. During the middle of the 20th century, a heavy emphasis was put on intensive management of poultry and livestock

in enclosed housing systems. The Polish Green-legged Partridge seemed to resist all attempts at intensive domestication. They often became nervous in such systems, resorting to feather-picking and cannibalism. For these reasons, many farms stopped raising them altogether, and by the early 1970s, the breed's numbers had dropped to near extinction.

What do they look like?

Poultry geneticist F.B. Hutt, referred to them as Polish Greenlegs in his 1949 book, *Genetics of the Fowl*. When many people hear the word "Polish," they automatically envision a chicken with a large crest or pom-pom on the head. Polish Green-legged Partridge chickens aren't part of the Polish breed, however, and don't resemble them. They more closely resemble a Welsummer in looks, body conformation, and color, albeit smaller. Females weigh 3.9 to 5 pounds, while males will tip the scales at about 4.8 to 6 pounds. Hens are a golden-tan in color, with the black-penciled pattern, known as "partridge," on the edges of the feathers. Roosters exhibit beautiful shades of red and gold, black, and often iridescent shades of blue. Both males and females have body conformations that might best be described as perfect examples of the quintessential "farmyard fowl," looking much like chickens in the farmyard paintings by the old European masters.

What's their history?

It's often hard to pinpoint how long some landraces have existed in their regions of origin. In many cases, the history of the breeds may trace back hundreds of years. Such ambiguity seems to be the case with the Green-legged Partridge. They were once widely distributed across Poland's farmland, and although they were domesticated, they seemed to have evolved and survived with minimal human intervention.



Polish Green-legged Partridge hen and rooster.

Once common throughout Poland, these now critically endangered landrace fowl are being brought back from the brink of extinction by a handful of breeders.

During the last quarter of the 19th century, Bronislaw Obfidowicz (1862-1919), a Polish physician and surgeon who also had a deep interest in animal breeding, wrote an article about the fowl for an agricultural magazine, *Howdoca Drobiu (Poultry Farming)*. Some contemporary historians say the article was first published in 1879 (Obfidowicz would've been 17 years old), while others say it was published in 1899. In any event, it seems to be the first time that a comprehensive description of the fowl was given in any publication. The article was written in support of the Imperial-Royal Agriculture Society of Krakow's efforts to identify and catalog uniform types of domestic poultry across the country.

There's a record of Green-legged Partridges being shown at the General Provincial Exhibition in Lviv, Ukraine, in 1894. Later, in 1921, a breed standard was drawn up by Maurycy Trybulski, a Polish academic and animal breeder. This standard was officially recognized in 1923. It's estimated that these birds were once raised on 70% of farms in Poland. By the early to mid-1970s, the birds had declined to such low levels that they were at risk of becoming extinct. The Polish government recognized the potential loss and began breeding programs to revive and save the breed. Today, two separate breeding flocks are kept by government universities in the country and are part of the breed preservation program. The breed has been designated as one of Poland's national breeds.

What's their current status?

Even with breed preservation programs in place, finding poultry keepers who actively keep and breed the fowl is a challenge. An exhaustive search for breeders and keepers of these birds in North America yielded no results. Numerous attempts to contact breeders and institutions in Poland went unanswered. I finally made headway by contacting the Rare Poultry Society of Great Britain. Mathew Roynon, the organization's secretary, was extremely helpful. He introduced me to a poultry keeper in North Yorkshire, England, Carol Oversby. Carol raises several breeds of chickens, as well as geese, on her four-hectare smallholding. She has raised Green-legged Partridge chickens since 2015, when she hatched her first brood from eggs acquired from another British poultry breeder, Amanda McCallion. Sadly, Amanda passed



Green-legged Partridge hens and rooster.

away last year, further reducing the very limited number of dedicated breeders who raise these fowl in the United Kingdom.

Carol described Green-legged Partridge chickens as "Not flighty, very hardy, and excellent layers of large white to off-white eggs." The birds are independent, excellent foragers, and enjoy running free. However, their independence doesn't mean feral. According to Carol, Green-legged Partridge females will return to the coop during the day to lay and at night to sleep. As long as they can run free during the day, they're happy.

Unfortunately, most poultry in England must currently be contained, by law, in enclosed housing, due to a recurrence of bird flu. According to Carol, Green-legged Partridge chickens become nervous and discontented while enclosed, and egg production declines. Although calm and docile when free-ranging, the roosters often become aggressive when confined.

While still very rare, the Green-legged Partridge is a breed that has much to offer homesteaders looking for hardy, dependable, and self-sufficient fowl. Hopefully, this interesting and unique breed will become available to poultry keepers in North America in the near future. ●

DOUG OTTINGER lives, works, and writes from his small hobby farm in northwest Minnesota. His educational background is in agriculture with an emphasis in poultry and avian science.



COMING EVENTS



The Coming Events listing is gathered and provided by **poultryshowcentral.com**. Add your show listing on their website or send to: **Coming Events, Backyard Poultry, 1503 SW 42nd St, Topeka, KS 66609** or email: editor@backyardpoultrymag.com.

To be included in the *Backyard Poultry* magazine listing, event details must be sent **90 days in advance**.

ATTENTION: Due to the avian influenza outbreak, some events may be canceled. Contact event coordinators to confirm before show dates. Poultry Show Central is working hard to stay updated, but changes are being made daily and these events may end up being canceled.

ALASKA

July 31 - August 9, 2026

Fairbanks, Alaska

Tanana Valley State Fair
www.poultryshowcentral.com/Tanana_Valley_State_Fair.html

CALIFORNIA

June 18-21, 2026

Placerville, California

El Dorado County Fair
www.poultryshowcentral.com/El_Dorado_County_Fair.html

COLORADO

June 14, 2026

Keenesburg, Colorado

Front Range Small Animal Auction
www.poultryshowcentral.com/Front_Range_Poultry_Swap.html

July 12, 2026

Keenesburg, Colorado

Front Range Small Animal Swap
www.poultryshowcentral.com/Front_Range_Poultry_Swap.html

CONNECTICUT

June 14, 2026

Haddam Neck, Connecticut

Connecticut Poultry Breeder's Society Spring Show
www.poultryshowcentral.com/Connecticut_Poultry_Breeders.html

DELAWARE

July 23 - August 1, 2026

Harrington, Delaware

Delaware State Fair
www.poultryshowcentral.com/Delaware_State_Fair.html

IOWA

June 6, 2026

Maquoketa, Iowa

Eastern Iowa Bird and Small Animal Swap
www.poultryshowcentral.com/Eastern_Iowa_Bird_Small_Animal_Swap.html

June 13, 2026

Waverly, Iowa

Waverly Iowa Exotic Bird and Animal Swap
www.poultryshowcentral.com/Waverly_Iowa_Exotic_Bird_Animal_Swap.html

June 28, 2026

Waukon, Iowa

Northeast Iowa Bird and Animal Club Swap
www.poultryshowcentral.com/Northeast_Iowa_Bird_Animal_Swap.html

July 26 - August 1, 2026

Waverly, Iowa

Bremer County Fair
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Bremer_County_Fair.html

ILLINOIS

June 7, 2026

Kankakee, Illinois

Tri-K Pigeon & Bantam Club
Pigeon Fair
www.poultryshowcentral.com/TriK_
Pigeon_Bantam_Fair.html

June 24-28, 2026

Oakwood, Illinois

Vermilion County Fair
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Vermilion_County_Fair.html

July 11-18, 2026

Georgetown, Illinois

Georgetown Fair Open Poultry
Show
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Georgetown_Fair.html

INDIANA

June 6, 2026

Kimmell, Indiana

Wolf's Swap meet
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Wolfs_Swap_Meet.html

June 20, 2026

Shipshewana, Indiana

Shipshewana Swap Meet
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Newbury_Square_Swap_Meet_
Flea_Market.html

June 26 - July 5, 2026

Indianapolis, Indiana

Marion County Agricultural Fair
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Marion_County_Fair.html

July 11, 2026

Kimmell, Indiana

Wolf's Swap meet
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Wolfs_Swap_Meet.html

KENTUCKY

June 8-13, 2026

Shelbyville, Kentucky

Shelby Co. Fair & Horse Show
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Shelby_County_Fair.html

MICHIGAN

June 20, 2026

Newport, Michigan

Michigan Pigeon Club Annual
Squeaker Show
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Michigan_Pigeon_Club_Annual_
Winter_Show.html

July 25, 2026

**ClareLoomis (Yoder's
Blacksmith Shop), Michigan**

Michigan Bird & Game Breeders
Assoc. Sale — Clare
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Michigan_Game_Breeders_Swap_
Clare.html

MINNESOTA

June 6, 2026

New Ulm, Minnesota

New Ulm Bird & Small Animal
Swap & Sale Days
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Brown_Co_Pigeon_Poultry_Club_
Swap.html

MISSOURI

June 4-7, 2026

Versailles, Missouri

Frank's Swap/Jacob's Cave
Swapping Days
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Jacobs_Cave_Swapping_Days.
html

July 30 - August 8, 2026

Springfield, Missouri

Ozark Empire Fair
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Ozark_Empire_Fair.html

MONTANA

July 24 - August 1, 2026

Great Falls, Montana

Montana State Fair
www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Montana_State_Fair.html

PULLET-SHUT

AUTOMATIC CHICKEN DOOR



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WHEN WILL YOUR LUCK RUN OUT?**

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Prevent losses.

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July 17-25, 2026

Minot, North Dakota

North Dakota State Fair
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
North_Dakota_State_Fair.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/North_Dakota_State_Fair.html)

NEBRASKA

June 6-7, 2026

Norfolk, Nebraska

Nelson Alternative Livestock
Auction
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Nelson_Alternative_Livestock_
Auction.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Nelson_Alternative_Livestock_Auction.html)

NEW JERSEY

June 28, 2026

Moorestown, New Jersey

Stars and Stripes Livestock Show
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Stars_and_Stripes.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Stars_and_Stripes.html)

July 25-26, 2026

Lambertville, New Jersey

Mercer County Invitational Show
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Mercer_County_4H_Fair_
Invitational_Poultry_Show.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Mercer_County_4H_Fair_Invitational_Poultry_Show.html)

July 31 - August 8, 2026

Augusta, New Jersey

New Jersey State Fair
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
New_Jersey_State_Fair.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/New_Jersey_State_Fair.html)

NEW YORK

June 7, 2026

Syracuse, New York

Finger Lakes Feather Club Show
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Finger_Lakes_Feather_Club_
Show.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Finger_Lakes_Feather_Club_Show.html)

OHIO

June 5-7, 2026

Lucasville, Ohio

Lucasville Trade Days
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Lucasville_Trade_Days.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Lucasville_Trade_Days.html)

June 6, 2026

Marysville, Ohio

BLT Livestock Swap Meet
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
BLT_Livestock_Auction.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/BLT_Livestock_Auction.html)

June 13, 2026

Canfield, Ohio

Buckeye Fancy Feather Club
Poultry Show
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Buckeye_Fancy_Feather_Club.
html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Buckeye_Fancy_Feather_Club.html)

July 17-18, 2026

Mt Hope, Ohio

Mid Ohio Swap Meet
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Mid_Ohio_Swap.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Mid_Ohio_Swap.html)

July 29 - August 9, 2026

Columbus, Ohio

Ohio State Fair
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Ohio_State_Fair.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Ohio_State_Fair.html)

OKLAHOMA

June 13, 2026

Norman, Oklahoma

Canadian Valley Poultry Club
Prospect Show
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Canadian_Valley_Poultry_Club_
Show.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Canadian_Valley_Poultry_Club_Show.html)

ONTARIO

June 20, 2026

Madoc, Ontario

Madoc Poultry Club Summer
Show
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Madoc_Poultry_Club_Summer_
Show.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Madoc_Poultry_Club_Summer_Show.html)

OREGON

July 21-25, 2026

Myrtle Point, Oregon

Coos County Fair
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Coos_County_Fair.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Coos_County_Fair.html)

July 29 - August 2, 2026

Grants Pass, Oregon

Josephine County Fair
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Josephine_County_Fair.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Josephine_County_Fair.html)

PENNSYLVANIA

June 6, 2026

Mercersburg, Pennsylvania

Snider's Elevator Poultry Swap
B-S-T
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Sniders_Elevator_Poultry_
Swap_B-S-T.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Sniders_Elevator_Poultry_Swap_B-S-T.html)

June 21, 2026

Dunbar, Pennsylvania

Uniontown Poultry and Farm
Products Association
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Uniontown_Poultry_Association.
html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Uniontown_Poultry_Association.html)

July 24 - August 2, 2026

York, Pennsylvania

York Fair
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
York_Fair.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/York_Fair.html)

July 25 - August 1, 2026

Lebanon, Pennsylvania

Lebanon Area Fair
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Lebanon_Area_Fair.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Lebanon_Area_Fair.html)

July 27 - August 1, 2026

West Chester, Pennsylvania

Goshen Country Fair
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Goshen_Country_Fair.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Goshen_Country_Fair.html)

July 30 - August 8, 2026

Dunbar, Pennsylvania

Fayette County Fair
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Fayette_County_Fair_PA.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Fayette_County_Fair_PA.html)

TENNESSEE

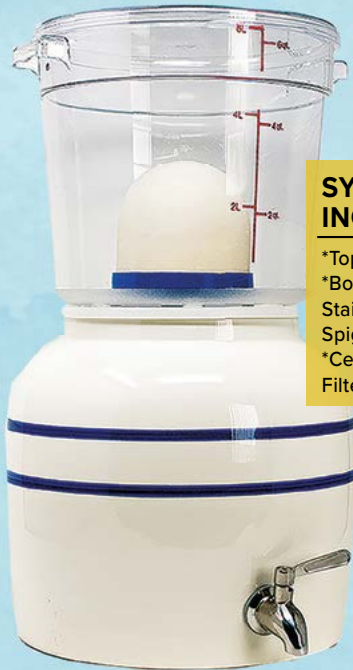
June 13, 2026

Alexandria, Tennessee

Middle TN Poultry/Bird/Animal
Swap
[www.poultryshowcentral.com/
Middle_TN_Poultry-Bird-Rabbit_
Swap.html](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com/Middle_TN_Poultry-Bird-Rabbit_Swap.html)

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backyardpoultry.iamcountryside.com/sweepstakes/brinsea-maxi

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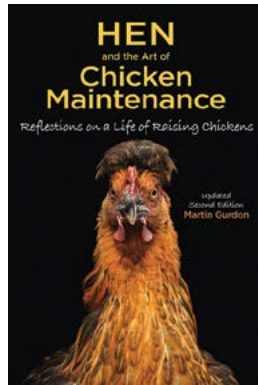
Entrants must be 18 years of age or older. Sweepstakes begins 05/12/2026 and ends 08/06/2026. See official rules online at backyardpoultry.iamcountryside.com/sweepstakes/brinsea-maxi | Sponsor: Backyard Poultry, 1503 SW 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609.



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This book is about keeping chickens, but it is also a feather-clad soap opera of primal urges. Written from firsthand experience, its pages are filled with the quest for absolute power, sex, death, jealousy, and huge vet bills. Beyond all the intrigue and drama, however, there are even some practical lessons to be learned about what not to do when keeping chickens. Martin Gurdon's hilarious "chicken memoir" relives the highs and lows of chicken ownership. The relationship between birds and humans is by turns heartwarming and bewildering, but it is always entertaining.



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POULTRYNET PLUS 12/48/3 STARTER KIT (BLACK/WHITE)

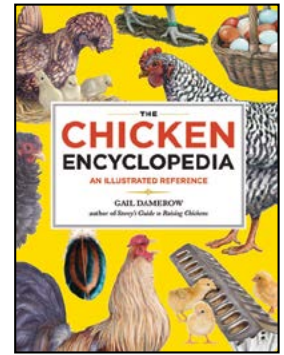
Everything you need in one convenient package to temporarily fence poultry in the backyard or on the pasture. 48" tall. 100' long. Choose this starter kit if you plan to move the fence daily/weekly and have light or flighty breeds such as Leghorns and Buttercups. Kit includes these essentials:

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- 4 48" FiberTuff™ support posts
- Solar IntelliShock® 60 fence energizer
- 5-Light Wireless Fence Tester

#8339 \$507.00

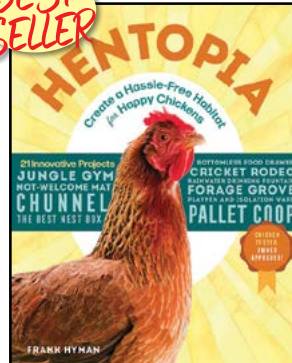
THE CHICKEN ENCYCLOPEDIA

Chickophiles will find breed descriptions, definitions of common chicken conditions, situations, behaviors, and much more. Whether it's the differences between wry tail, split tail, and gamy tail; the meaning of hen feathered, forced molt, or quill feather; the characteristics of droopy wing; the content of granite grit; or the translation of a chicken's alarm call, here are all the answers to every chicken question and quandary.



#5834 \$19.95 **Sale Price:** \$16.96

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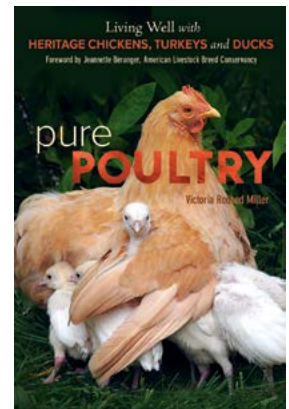
HENTOPIA

Keep chickens with less work and more joy! Free yourself from the burden of daily hending tasks, and go on vacation without worrying about your flock. How? Turn your backyard into a hentopia: a chicken habitat that keeps your flock safe, clean, fed, and entertained, with less work left over for you. From the Vending Machine Feeder to the Refilling Rainwaterer, author Frank Hyman's innovative building projects are designed to save time and money while taking the best care of your chickens.

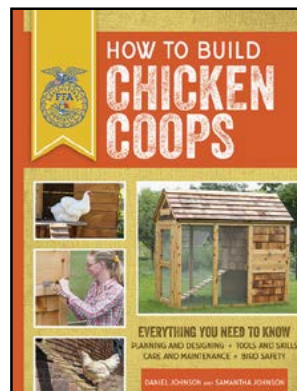
#9358 \$24.95 **Sale Price:** \$21.21

PURE POULTRY

Houdan. Nankin. Indian Runner. Narragansett. These may sound like exotic place names or unusual varieties of produce, but each actually refers to one of the many hundreds of lesser-known poultry breeds that venture into less-familiar territory. Providing an alternative to commercial breeds and hybrids, heritage breeds each boast their own unique characteristics and personality traits and are a valuable (and entertaining) addition to a sustainable food system. *Pure Poultry* is the first book in nearly 100 years to focus specifically on heritage breeds of chickens, turkeys, and ducks and their role in a self-reliant lifestyle.



#6848 \$19.95 **Sale Price:** \$11.95



HOW TO BUILD CHICKEN COOPS

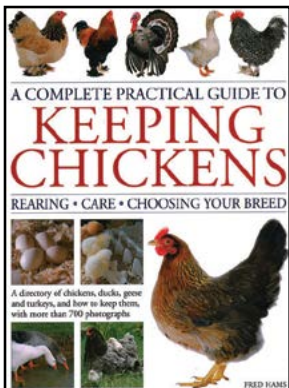
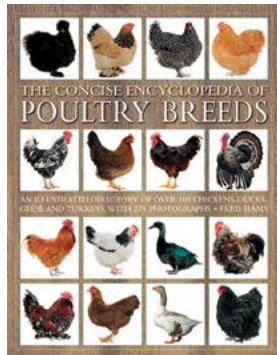
Inside, authors Daniel and Samantha Johnson answer questions such as: How much space will you need? How many nest boxes and windows will your birds require? How much will it cost? What steps do you need to take to keep your chickens safe from predators? Whether you are interested in starting an urban or suburban flock, or just curious about country living or urban farming, *How to Build Chicken Coops* is a trusted guide that takes the guesswork out of building a safe and comfortable home that's just right for your flock.

#9564 \$19.99 **Sale Price:** \$16.99

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THE CONCISE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF POULTRY BREDS

A comprehensive collection of the world's pure domestic fowl, featuring foundation, true bantam and man-made breeds, plus waterfowl and turkey breeds. Describes many popular breeds, from New Hampshire Red, and Scots Dumpy to Java and North Hollan Blue, plus rarer breeds such as the Brecon Buff Goose and Vorverk. Fascinating descriptions of each breed includes essential information about varieties, weight and size, temperament, egg yield and preferred housing environment.
 #12644 \$14.99

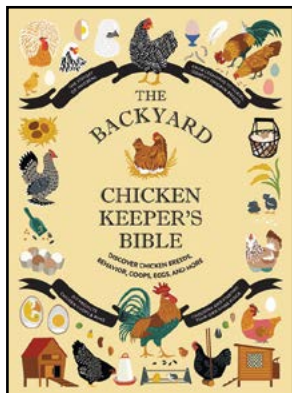


A COMPLETE PRACTICAL GUIDE TO KEEPING CHICKENS

Expert advice on choosing, buying, rearing, breeding and exhibiting domestic fowl, with step-by-step techniques and 700 photographs. Includes a comprehensive visual encyclopedia of the world's pure breeds of chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese, describing the key characteristics of each. Information is provided on poultry housing, maintenance, feeding, security, health and hygiene. Features advice on preparing birds and eggs for competitive exhibition.
 #12642 \$25.00 Sale Price: \$21.25

THE BACKYARD CHICKEN KEEPER'S BIBLE

Environmental and homestead writers Jessica Ford, Rachel Federman, and Sonya Patel Ellis pack this book with everything you need to embrace a new chicken-keeping lifestyle fully. A sumptuous aesthetic is paired with practical tips on identifying backyard breeds and supporting good chicken health, ranging from basic brooding to common ailments.
 #12161 \$40.00 Sale Price: \$34.00



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO BUTCHERING, SMOKING, CURING, SAUSAGE, AND JERKY MAKING

Absolutely everything you need to know about how to dress and preserve meat is right here. From slaughtering to processing to preserving in ways like smoking, salting, and making jerky, author Philip Hasheider teaches it all in step-by-step instructions and illustrations. Learn how to properly secure the animal and safely and humanely transform the meat into future meals for your family. Along the way, you'll become an expert on different cuts of meat and all

the right ways to process them into different products, like sausages and jerky.
 #11217 \$27.99 Sale Price: \$23.79

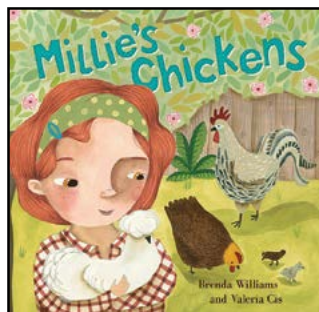
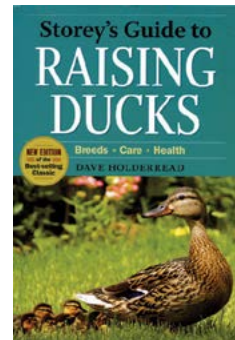


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This 5-gallon QuikClean Waterer is the ideal waterer for any chicken coop. With a removable lid on top (which makes filling and cleaning easy), this item ensures your flock will always be well-watered. The waterer measures 18 inches high, with a 13-inch pan diameter and 2-inch pan depth. It weighs approximately 40 pounds when full.
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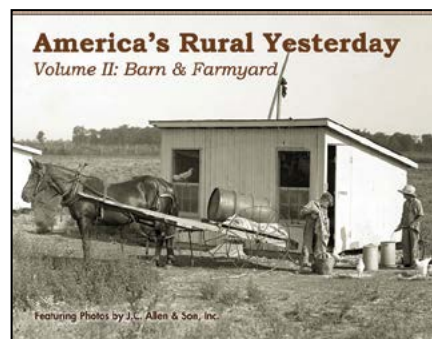
STOREY'S GUIDE TO RAISING DUCKS

Dave Holderread provides the information you need to raise ducks successfully, covering everything from choosing the right breeds (including rare breeds and hybrid ducks) to breeding and rearing practices, feeding, housing, health care, butchering, and much more. This thoroughly revised and updated second edition includes coverage of more breeds plus expanded information on facilities for ducklings, health and disease treatment, marketing, record keeping, color genetics, and rare breed conservation.
 #4648 \$19.95 Sale Price: \$16.96



MILLIE'S CHICKENS

Watch Millie care for her suburban backyard chickens in this playful rhyming story. Then, delve into 7 pages of educational endnotes to learn all about chickens, including anatomy and breeds, and 4 easy egg dishes to try together! A fun way to introduce kids to life sciences and where food comes from. Ages 3-7.
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AMERICA'S RURAL YESTERDAY: VOLUME 2, BARN & FARMYARD

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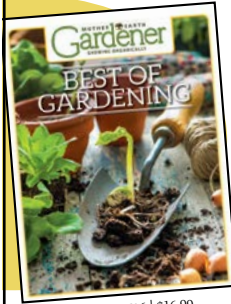

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flock Photos



— By Ashley Hudson



Gus and Grace the Buckeye. Guarding the door and watching the birds. — By Debby Dathe



— By Kelly Hailey Schoenberger

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— By Dandi Gentry



— By Jay Janssen



This was Novea (no-VAY-ah) with the treat cup on her head. She was eating treats out of it and her Polish mop on her head got stuck in it for about two seconds. — By Nicky Mase



— By Shanie Heger

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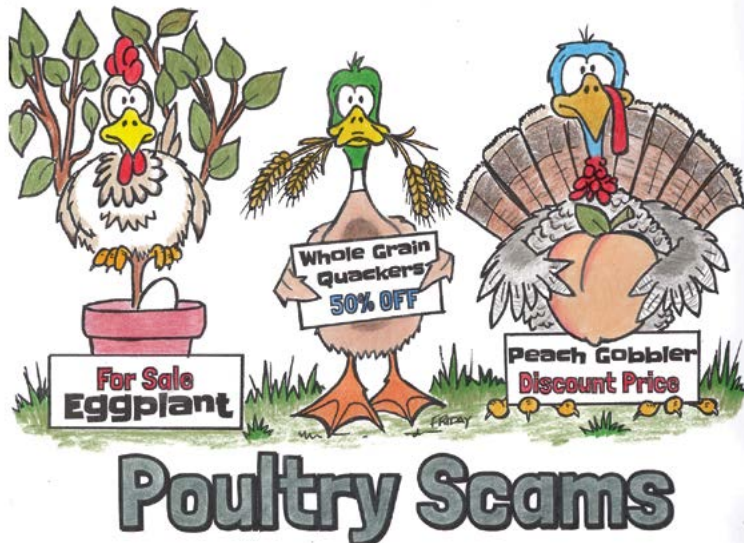


JUST FOR FUN

Backyard Poultry Word Search June/July 2026

X E R O O S T E R S B I N I P X L C P S D A F M
 T Y G L X A I R E E G D I R T R A P D R U I I T
 P T N G E X N I Z Q H I X O T Z I A P E C X F O
 J I S X L W L D A Y B N M S F J P Y U H K I A C
 G R D O Y A N Q L T G R X T T O W L U T L D E R
 T U M B C T Y Y S N R S Y N J T J Q V A I B Q O
 X C B N R I Z I I P V I E A Z A F C M E N O G W
 M E Y I S O A W N T I N R I I T B C P F G R U I
 Y S Q O I C O L E G Y R G G I O A C Z T S S L N
 W O U B Y H W D M K S U P Y E I P N O M E L U G
 J I X I S H I R E E A H C E S F S E I V O M F T
 A B L W M Q C P V R D Y U S D O O C H F A B G Y
 D A L A S B O C D I V I N R A W C A A X R F H Y
 R O V Z Z Q L G H S W Z A E X Q R V C M I Y V V
 R D F S Y K E I W O Y Y F J Y U R A E S S Y I I
 B H A Z V E T H E R A P Y C H I C K E N S D G I
 W P Z G S D A V U V O K D Y Z G K T V D E Y D P
 A O M E V L S C G H H X R D B V N B T O P U V P
 T N I P I E D J Q D X J T Z F W X I G G M D Q Z
 E A G Y T Q H D A L A S B B O C N A H T E T Y P
 R G Y I O D U S T B A T H Q X P M Y V C O A I Z
 W E M H M I K H T R A E S U O E C A M O T A I D
 G R U C F R W V V D T H M G S F X X O I M A I I
 E O X R F L G Z T J Z D E I X P E M Y H T C H N

- COBB SALAD
- WATER
- SHOWING
- FEATHERS
- SOCIAL MEDIA
- HATCHING
- EGG LAYING
- CROWING
- ROOSTERS
- BIOSECURITY
- BROODER
- MITES
- DUST BATH
- OREGANO
- THYME
- DIATOMACEOUS
- EARTH
- LEMON PIE
- THERAPY CHICKENS
- GUARD GEESE
- JERSEY GIANTS
- DUCKLINGS
- MOVIES
- VIDEO GAMES
- PARTRIDGE
- SCAMS

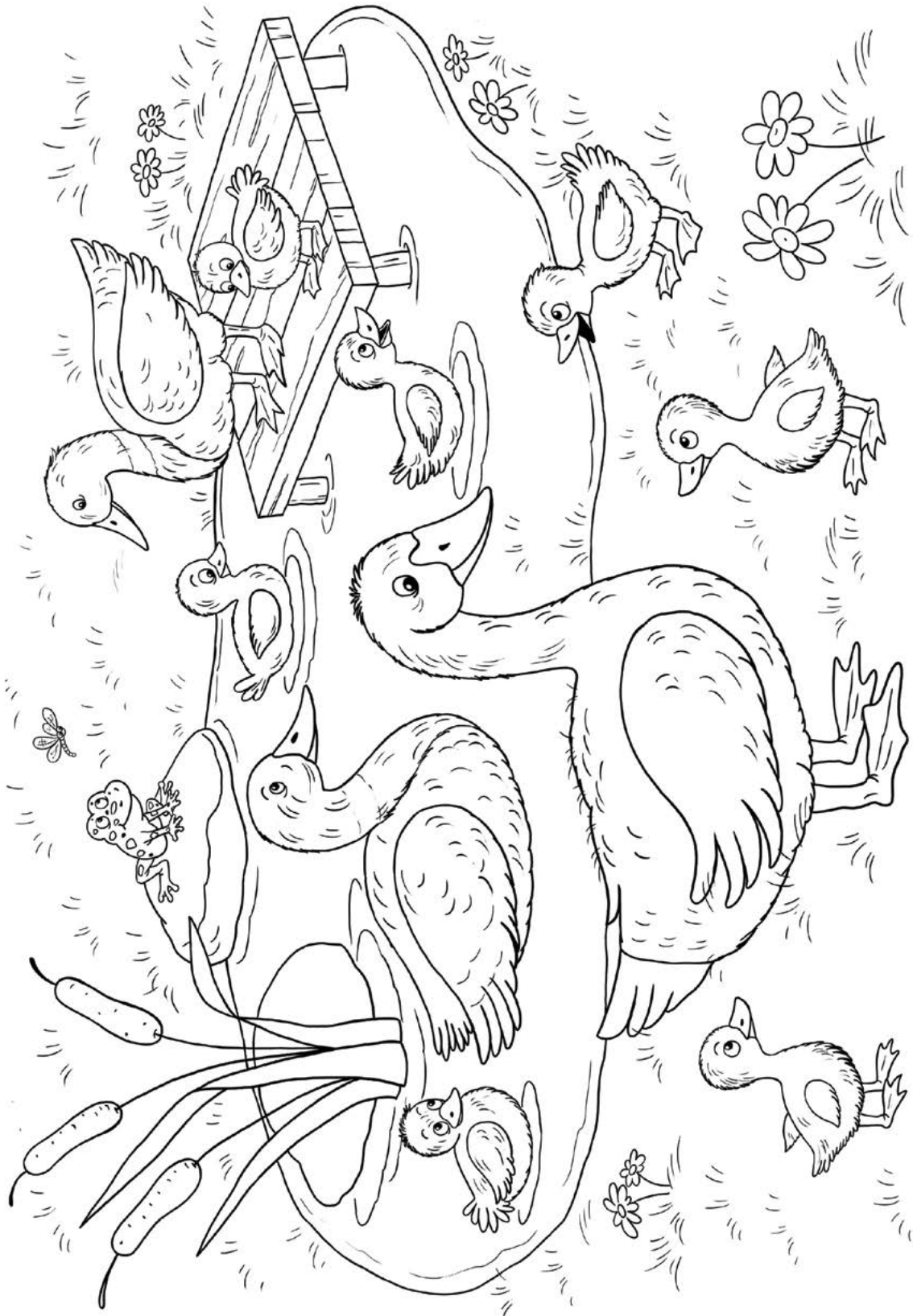


Answer Key

A grid of letters with red boxes highlighting the words found in the search. The words are arranged in various orientations: horizontally, vertically, and diagonally. The words include: COBB, SALAD, WATER, SHOWING, FEATHERS, SOCIAL MEDIA, HATCHING, EGG LAYING, CROWING, ROOSTERS, BIOSECURITY, BROODER, MITES, DUST BATH, OREGANO, THYME, DIATOMACEOUS, EARTH, LEMON PIE, THERAPY CHICKENS, GUARD GEESE, JERSEY GIANTS, DUCKLINGS, MOVIES, VIDEO GAMES, PARTRIDGE, and SCAMS.

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1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12

1. Lucy J.; 2. Ruetta S., age 84; 3. Elizah, age 12; 4. Irene, age 13;
 5. Josiah, age 12; 6. LuLu, age 5; 7. Olivia, age 4;
 8. Willow, age 4; 9. Andrew, age 8; 10. Joseph; 11. Emily; 12. Noemi, age 9



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