

A man with grey hair, glasses, and a beard is smiling and holding a black and white speckled chicken. The chicken has a red comb and wattle. The man is wearing a red and black plaid shirt.

**3rd**  
EDITION

**57**

# **CHICKEN HEALTH**

**EXPERT TIPS**

**TAKE THE GUESSWORK OUT OF  
RAISING HAPPY & HEALTHY CHICKENS**

**ARTHUR RENAUD**



57

Chicken  
Health Tips



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# TOP TIPS





## TOP TIPS

1

### **Apple Cider Vinegar**

In the chickens' drinker will help lessen slime build-up, help with digestion and encourage good bacteria. Simply add a teaspoon to your chooks' water three times a week for gut-boosting benefits.

2

### **Excessive Treats**

Can cause obesity, protein deficiencies, egg binding, reduced egg production and increase the risk of heat stroke. It's a good idea to limit treats to 10% of your chickens' diet. Only feed fruits, veggies, and other snacks after they've had their nutrient-dense commercial feed, so that they don't fill up on treats as this can cause an upset tummy!

3

### **Feed Pumpkin**

To your chickens! It is full of vitamins A, B and C, and is packed with zinc and potassium which are key nutrients for them! Pumpkin seeds are also a great natural wormer, so make sure to feed them the whole thing - hang a carved pumpkin in their coop for a boredom-busting treat filled with goodness.

4

### **Hemp Bedding**

In the nesting box is a much healthier and better option than straw or shredded paper. Hemp is natural, helps fight parasites, and works incredibly well for odour management. Just remember to rake it once a week at least in order to keep it fresh!

## TOP TIPS

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### **Observe Droppings**

On a weekly basis because it can tell you a lot about your chickens' health and wellness. I know, it's a bit yucky, but it's worth it. Runny, yellow, excessively smelly, or bloody poop can all be indications that your chickens are unwell.

6

### **Dust Baths**

Are fantastic and should be in every run or free-range area. Ensure your chickens have a dust bath that they can use at their leisure, it's like a human shower. It's necessary! It helps fight parasites and keeps them clean. Fill an old car tyre with fine sand, Diatomaceous Earth, and wood ash for the ideal chicken bath!

7

### **Raw Eggs**

and their shells should never be fed to your chickens, and don't let your chickens eat whole eggs or whole shells as it will encourage them to eat the fresh laid eggs before you have a chance to! Collecting eggs from the nesting boxes every day is a good way to curb this behavior.

8

### **Refresh Water**

Daily. This is probably the most important health tip we can offer you. Did you know chickens can drink up to ½ a cup per hen, per day in the summer? Chickens are thirsty little creatures and can dehydrate incredibly easily, so they should always have access to fresh water. Additionally, stagnant water is a breeding ground for bacteria, so keep it clean!

## TOP TIPS

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### **Deep Clean**

the coop every month. Deep cleaning the coop gets rid of all the old droppings, feathers, and potential parasites. Especially in hot or humid weather, soiled bedding is a haven for bacteria and parasites. Especially if your girls have already had a parasite infection, it is important to refresh the bedding to prevent a secondary outbreak.

10

### **Feed Grit**

To your chickens. Grit is small, hard stones or pebbles that help them digest their food. Because chickens don't have teeth, grit is important to help them grind their food down in their crop. Grit can be mixed in with the feed or fed in a separate bowl. Free-ranging chickens tend to find their own grit as they go around pecking at the ground and the soil.

### NOTES

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# NUTRITION





## NUTRITION

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### **Refill Feed**

Only when the chickens have finished it all. Chickens are smart and some are picky eaters. They will likely eat the tasty seeds and leave the rest, which results in an unbalanced diet if you refill the feed before it has been finished.

12

### **Feed Oyster Shells**

To laying hens. This is a wonderful calcium boost and will enhance egg production and create hard eggshells. Oyster shell grit should be fed in a separate bowl as the hens will know how much they need. Too much calcium can also cause trouble, so it's best to be safe and feed it separately.

13

### **Scrambled or Boiled Eggs**

Are fine to feed to your chickens. They provide a great source of protein and vitamins especially during molting. Just be sure to mash the boiled eggs so they don't resemble raw eggs, and never add salt or any other spices to eggs meant for your chickens.

14

### **Mealworms**

Are an excellent source of protein. Feed them to your chickens during the molting season. Feathers are mostly made up of protein, and as your girls regrow their feathers during the molt, they will need additional protein to make sure that they have enough to grow the feathers and to keep themselves healthy.

## NUTRITION

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### **Include an Omega-3 Supplement**

In your chicken feed. It helps to increase the Omega-3 levels in the eggs they lay. An easy way to do this is to add flaxseeds to your chickens' diet. You can mix it in with their treats, add it to a flock block, or simply offer it as scratch! Flaxseeds contain an Omega-3 fatty acid called linoleic acid, and the hen will deposit this into the egg yolk!

16

### **Feed Watermelon Chunks**

On hot days. It's a cool and refreshing treat and your hens will love it. Hens can eat the entire watermelon from peel to stem, so slice it up in sections and hand it out for a summer party.

17

### **Feed Your Hens a Flock Block**

That they can peck at happily instead of each other. This keeps them happy and entertained and is a fantastic boredom-buster stuffed full of goodness.

18

### **Ferment your Chicken Feed**

As this improves the nutritional value and makes it easier for your chickens to digest.

19

### **Give your Chickens Table Scraps**

Especially fruits and vegetables. Chickens, just like humans, love variety in their diet, and healthy and chicken-friendly table scraps adds not only variety but additional nutrients to their diet.

## NUTRITION

20

### **Hang a Whole Cabbage**

Inside the run just above the heads of your chickens. In winter, this is a great boredom buster as they will happily hop and peck at it, which keeps them active and entertained when they cannot venture out.

21

### **Feed Fish Meal**

To boost your chickens' phosphorus levels. This can be mixed into their feed every second month or so. Remember, as with everything, moderation is key.

22

### **Hang Stalks of Dry Grains**

High enough in the coop in winter so that your chickens have to stretch and hop to reach them. This gives them exercise when it's too cold to roam free. As a bonus, the high-fiber content takes longer to digest which keeps them full and warm.

23

### **Freeze Treats**

Like chopped-up strawberries and fresh corn kernels in blocks of ice and then place these in the coop on hot days. The hens will peck at the block, which helps them ingest ice and cool down, trying to get at the yummy goodies inside.

24

### **Leave Enough Feed Out in Winter**

All day. Chickens will consume more in the cold weather because they need the extra energy to stay warm.

## NUTRITION

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### **Put a Box of Charcoal**

In the coop, especially in winter. This helps to keep your hens healthy. Chickens will peck at the charcoal, which results in less ammonia in their poop. Too much ammonia build-up, especially in winter when you're probably employing the Deep Litter method, can cause respiratory problems in chickens.

26

### **Try Using a Heated Dog Bowl**

For their water in freezing temperatures to keep the water from freezing. Chickens need to drink water as they dehydrate very easily, and frozen water cannot be drunk and will be too cold to peck at in winter.

### NOTES

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# HEALTH





## HEALTH

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### **Separate Ill Hens**

From the others. If you see an ill hen, quickly separate her from the rest of the flock otherwise they may peck her to death. Horrible, I know, but chickens are flock animals and a weak member of the flock means that the entire flock is compromised, so they will sacrifice the ill for the healthy.

28

### **Poultry Nipple Waterers**

Are better to use than a regular waterer as this will ensure that your chickens always have fresh, clean water. As an added bonus, it also reduces the risk of disease because other animals generally can't access these which means that they are less susceptible to be contaminated by parasites carried by rodents and other pesky intruders.

29

### **Don't Provide Supplemental Lighting**

For adolescent chickens. The additional light hours will mean that your young chickens will mature too quickly and lay eggs before their bodies are ready. This can be detrimental to their health and cause a range of egg-related problems.

30

### **Keep Mice and Rats Out**

Of the chicken coop. These rodents carry diseases and will eat all the chicken feed. Unfortunately, rats and mice are very small and can slip through chicken mesh and small gaps in the coop. The best way to deter rodents is to keep your coop clean and your feed stored in an airtight and sealed container.

## HEALTH

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### **Vaccinate Chickens**

To prevent diseases. If you're buying chicks from a reputable hatchery or breeder, they will already be vaccinated. If you are hatching your own, it is important to get them vaccinated. Most chicks are vaccinated at day-old, but you can also vaccinate older chickens. Vaccinations differ by country, so it is best to consult your local avian vet for the vaccinations you will need and how to administer them.

32

### **Install a Heater**

In the coop to keep your chickens warm on cold winter nights. Most chickens are cold-hardy due to their feathers, especially larger breeds and the fluffier breeds with denser feathers such as Orpingtons, Brahmas, and Silkies. Check on your chickens and if it seems they are cold, install a heater to help them beat the winter blues.

33

### **Add Electrolyte Solution**

To the drinking water in very hot weather. This is a great pick-me-up, but once a week is sufficient.

34

### **Use Hardware Cloth**

To keep predators, including rats and mice, out of the chicken coop. You can sink hardware cloth around the external perimeter of the coop and run to make sure that digging predators are also deterred.

## HEALTH

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### **Grow Catnip**

Around the coop. It will keep insects away and keeps the coop smelling clean and fresh.

36

### **Add Ice Cubes to the Drinking Water**

On hot days. This ensures that the water stays cool for longer on summer days. It will also help keep your chickens cooler as they drink the chilled water.

37

### **Check your Chickens Daily**

To detect any problems or illnesses quickly. Plus, they'll enjoy the interaction. It is a fantastic way of ensuring your chickens are used to your presence, are tamer around people, and bond with their human families. Plus, you'll catch any warning signs of illness very quickly and have a healthier flock to boot.

38

### **Sprinkle Diatomaceous Earth**

Around the coop area when cleaning the chicken coop. It can prevent and kill off mites and lice. Just be sure to check that it's food-grade.

39

### **Rub Petroleum Jelly**

On chickens' wattles and combs every other day if there's a danger of frostbite. If the temperature drops below freezing, make sure that you cover these extremities well. Chickens with larger combs and wattles are more susceptible to frostbite.

# HEALTH

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## **Use Flat, Wooden Perches**

In cold climates as these help to prevent frostbite in the feet of your chickens. This allows chickens to spread their feet out to keep them warm with their feathers.

41

## **Grow Pennyroyal and Fennel**

Around the coop to repel insects. You can also crush these and sprinkle them inside the coop and nesting boxes. If you're sprinkling fresh herbs in nesting boxes, just make sure to remove them before they wilt and become moldy.

### NOTES

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# BEHAVIOUR





## BEHAVIOUR

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### **Never Overcrowd**

Your chicken coop. Overcrowding is the most common cause of stress-related behaviors such as fighting, vent pecking, and bullying, and unfortunately these behaviors can be very deadly.

43

### **Let Chickens Roam**

Chickens love to forage and letting them roam free in your yard will keep them happy and healthy. Chickens need to scratch and foraging offers them access to little insects and bugs that supplement their diet. As a bonus, they'll also keep your veggie patch free from pests.

44

### **One Rooster to 12 Hens**

Prevents over-mating and injured chickens. Plus, the girls will get cranky with too much attention, and too many roosters may fight among each other.

45

### **Provide a Cool Water Bath**

In a shady spot on hot summer days. Chickens regulate their temperature through not only their combs and wattles, but also their feet and legs. Although not all chickens will enjoy a bath, some will happily wade around in shallow water to cool themselves off on a hot day.

46

### **Collect the Eggs Every Day**

Collecting eggs every day not only ensures that you have a fresh breakfast every morning, but it also avoids your hens becoming broody, and will discourage hens from eating their own eggs.

## BEHAVIOUR

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### **Place a Packet of Frozen Vegetables**

Under a broody hen to break her broodiness. A broody hen is hot as she needs to incubate her eggs. The frozen veggies will reduce her body temperature and make her think she's not broody anymore, and she'll get up from the nest.

48

### **Clip the Wings**

Of new chickens you introduce to the flock to stop them from flying over the fence and visiting the neighbours, or roosting in the trees. Clipping their wings, when done properly, does not harm or hurt chickens, and is a good way of keeping them safe and contained.

49

### **Ensure Your Coop Gets Sunlight**

Chickens love to bask in the sun in the warmer weather, and you'll often see them stretch out in a sunny spot. Give them the benefit of some Vitamin D and make sure that your coop or run area has a spot that gets sunlight for at least a few hours a day.

50

### **Provide Ventilation in the Coop**

Chickens need fresh air to keep them healthy. Ventilation is important, but it is equally critical to avoid any drafts that blow directly onto their roosts or nesting boxes.

51

### **Put a Padlock on the Door**

Of the coop to keep out human egg or chicken thieves. It is a sad reality, but it's always better to be safe rather than sorry, and a padlock will deter any long-fingered people from getting at your chooks.

## BEHAVIOUR

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### **Consider Raising a Guard Goose**

With your chickens to keep predators away. A guard goose is an entertaining and beautiful addition to any backyard flock and as they can be aggressive when protecting their flocks, will make sure nothing gets to your precious chooks.

53

### **Place a Block of Wood**

In front of the feeder for younger chickens to use as a step-stool. This is particularly important if you have a broody hen with a clutch of chicks. She will show them where to eat, but they may not be able to reach without a step.

54

### **Tame Your Chickens**

While they're young by offering them treats until they eat out of your hand. This makes the whole process of keeping chickens more rewarding for both you and them. After a while, all you'll have to do is to shake a bag of crushed corn and the flock will come running.

55

### **Place Ceramic or Toy Eggs**

In the nesting box to train young chickens to lay their eggs in the boxes. Chickens mimic one another and if they see others doing it, they'll do it too. The same goes for eggs.

56

### **Deter Birds of Prey**

By hanging old shiny CDs around the yard. The reflection will scare the birds away. You can even fashion them into pretty designs to make it more aesthetically appealing for you.

## BEHAVIOUR

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### **Establish a Daily Routine**

For feeding, watering, and cleaning when it comes to your chickens. By doing this, you won't neglect them and they'll learn when to expect you.

#### NOTES

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