



Health Promotion Recommendations for Poultry Conservation

In recent years Avian Influenza and other infectious diseases, like Exotic Newcastle Disease, have threatened flocks and made transportation of birds difficult. Poultry raisers can protect their valuable flocks by establishing biosecurity procedures and promoting flock health. Here are some suggestions for keeping your poultry healthy and preventing the introduction of disease into your flock.

Health Promotion

1. Observe your flock. Disease Prevention starts by noticing changes in the behavior or health of poultry. Signs of ill health may include: watery eyes; nasal discharge; paleness of face, comb and wattles; swelling around eyes; odor; runny or off-colored manure; lack of normal activity; slowness of movement; walking backwards; shivering or hunchiness; irregular shape or color of iris; and loss of appetite and weight.
2. Provide an environment conducive to supporting the health of poultry. Dust and ammonia from old manure can damage the health of lungs, making poultry prone to infection. The rule of thumb is if you find the smell offensive or it burns your eyes, or the dust makes you sneeze, then it is past time to clean the facilities.
3. Encourage healthy levels of activity. Exercise is important for muscle tone, good circulation and health, particularly in active breeds. Providing poultry room to move around, as well as an environment tailored to their needs (i.e. roosts, nest boxes or pools, etc.), will greatly increase their level of activity.
4. Provide adequate quality feed. Proper nutrition is essential to the health of poultry and help stave off diseases. A bird that has been poorly fed is under stress and will be more prone to infection. Feed should be nutritionally balanced, fresh and free from molds or fungi, and in sufficient quantities to satisfy the needs of the poultry.
5. Provide clean, fresh water. Water should be changed daily for optimum health, and the containers cleaned weekly or more often if necessary. Allowing a film to form on the water container exposes your poultry to small doses of toxins released from this algae-like material. While this exposure rarely affects healthy stock, individuals whose immune systems are already challenged may be at greater risk of becoming ill. Chicks that drink from water containers with slime buildup, and that have infrequent water changes, show a greater mortality to coccidiosis.

6. Prevent parasite infestations. Common infestations, such as lice, mites, and worms, should be treated before they affect the health of poultry. Parasites not only make poultry uncomfortable, but they also reduce vitality by robbing them of blood nutrients – leading to anemia, mal-nutrition and even death.
7. Reduce stress. Stress opens the doors to disease outbreak. While it is true that exposure to unclean environments can help develop an immune system, this type of exposure challenges the immune system. Stress is also caused by poor feeding habits, lack of fresh water, and lack of exercise. An already challenged immune system is less effective at warding off disease. This is why it is advisable to enhance your husbandry practices during times of potential exposure to disease outbreaks..
8. Vaccinate to help prevent disease. Vaccination is an excellent tool for protecting your flock. Vaccines cause the natural development of antibodies. The American Poultry Association has excellent advice on which types of vaccines can be used. Visit their site at www.amerpoultryassn.com. As an example, there is some evidence that Newcastle vaccine may provide at least partial immunity to Exotic Newcastle disease. It is always a good idea to vaccinate for diseases that are prevalent in your part of the country.
9. Build the health of poultry by feeding them more than just the necessities. Supplements can be used to build the health of poultry. Vitamin-mineral supplements, probiotics, greens such as kale, access to growing plants, and even yogurt and whey can be used to build the health of poultry.