

Backyard chickens



Many people purchase chickens as pets and to have a few laying hens. It's important to understand that whether you're a commercial producer, or only keep a few chickens in your backyard, you need biosecurity practices in place to ensure your hens are happy and healthy, and to protect your family from illness.

There are simple steps you can take to reduce the chance of pests and diseases entering or spreading among your chickens.

- Before purchasing chickens, check your local council requirements.
- Implement good hygiene and biosecurity to help safeguard against unwanted diseases, some of which affect both people and chickens, including Avian influenza (dpi.nsw.gov.au/ai) and *Salmonella* Enteritidis (dpi.nsw.gov.au/se).
- Always wash your hands after handling chickens or eggs.
- Poultry housing hygiene is critical - nesting, roosting areas and enclosures should be sanitised regularly.
- Don't let feed or water become contaminated by faeces or other waste products. Clean feeders, drinkers and storage tanks and bins regularly and ensure the feed and water supply is from a source that is free of contact with wild birds and rodents. Poultry need clean, fresh and safe feed and water, just like we do.
- Avoid visiting places with other birds if you have your own as this could facilitate the moment of diseases between flocks.
- Limit visitors to your chickens or ask visitors to wear clean boots and clothing or provide personal protective equipment.
- Avoid contact between your chickens and wild birds by restricting access to open ponds, lakes and creeks as water birds are known carriers of disease. Use netting to protect domestic bird areas.
- Quarantine new chickens - separate and monitor new chickens for at least 30 days before introducing them to your existing flock, and always source chickens from a reputable producer or breeder.
- Prior to purchase, check which vaccinations the chickens have received and then in consultation with your veterinarian, maintain a vaccination program.
- Know the signs of disease which can include swollen heads, dullness, drop in egg production, respiratory distress, diarrhoea, loss of appetite, or sudden death of several or more birds.
- Egg cleaning - discard cracked, damaged or heavily soiled eggs. Lightly soiled eggs should be cleaned with a dry cloth or a tissue. Never wash your eggs with water as it makes them porous and can enable bacteria on the surface to penetrate and contaminate the egg.

DID YOU KNOW . . .



Re-using old egg cartons is a disease risk

- Farm fresh eggs can become contaminated with *Salmonella* before their shells even develop.
- The bacteria on and within eggs can pass into a cardboard egg carton and, from there, onto the next set of eggs placed inside.
- Re-using cartons also means the expiration and packing dates on cartons will not be correct for the new eggs

Looking to sell your eggs?

Did you know that if you're a small egg farmer (you produce less than 20 dozen (240 eggs) a week) you are required to 'notify' your flock with the NSW Food Authority before selling your eggs?

There are no exemptions – even selling your eggs from your farm or at the local markets require notification. You can notify online, free of charge at foodnotify.nsw.gov.au.

As soon as you start selling your eggs, there are also labelling and egg stamping requirements you need to adhere to (foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/egg-stamping).

Salmonella Enteritidis

Salmonella is a bacteria commonly found in animals, including chickens. It can cause illness to humans such as gastroenteritis ('gastro') when contaminated food is consumed.

Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) is a type of Salmonella that is present in most international egg industries. Salmonellosis is one of the most common and widely distributed foodborne diseases.

SE is a high-risk for causing foodborne illness in people - which can be particularly severe for those over the age of 70, young children, and those with a weakened immune system.

SE can be spread from property to property through the movement of birds, eggs, manure, produce, equipment, feed, rodents, people and vehicles. Read more at dpi.nsw.gov.au/se.

From 30 June 2020, a Control Order was put in place in NSW to minimise and manage the biosecurity risk of SE.



For egg safety tips, head to:

foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/consumer/special-care-foods/eggs-enjoy-safely

Need more information?

For more information, click the links below:

- NSW Department of Primary Industries - dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/poultry-and-birds/poultry-planning-and-keeping
- NSW Food Authority - foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/eggs/small-egg-farms
- Local Land Services - lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/south-east/key-projects/every-bit-counts/resources/livestock
- Australian Eggs – australianeggs.org.au/for-farmers
- Egg Farmers of Australia - eggfarmersaustralia.org

If you see any unusual signs of disease, or death in your chickens, call your veterinarian, your Local Land Services District Veterinarian or the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline

EMERGENCY ANIMAL
DISEASE WATCH HOTLINE
1800 675 888



Egg Farmers
of Australia

