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Hi

Welcome to my Keeping Chickens Newsletter.

Thanks to everyone who has sent in their keeping chickens tips, stories and photos etc. - as usual, if you have anything chicken related (tips, photos, stories, questions, coops etc.) you'd like to share in future issues of the newsletter or blog posts then just email news@self-sufficient-life.com and I will do my best to answer / include them.

Best Wishes
Gina
Subscriber Letters

Louise: I came across a site the other day on google in which they were discussing making your own calcium for human consumption but it would probably work okay for chooks as well. They suggested using clean egg shells from organically grown chooks. These you dry properly and then grind to a fine powder using a coffee grinder as apparently they work best. You could experiment with other products. This is then stored in an air tight container and a half teaspoon used twice daily for adults. This would make a cheaper calcium additive for your chooks and as the egg shells are ground up and added to the mash etc, the chooks shouldn’t be tempted to start eating their eggs. One egg shell is supposed to be the equivalent of a teaspoon but I guess it would depend on the size of the actual egg.

To Christine who said that she was using dog food instead to avoid antibiotics. I don’t know what country she lives in but if it is the US, then the corn would be GMO and so strictly not organic. In fact quite harmful to human health if eating constantly. Fortunately, here in Australia we don’t have that problem either, so that is two things to be thankful for.

Helen: Here is a photo of the finish chicken coop and lot for my new girls. Which I'm getting on May 23rd
Marsha: These are some photos of my coop in SW Florida. The hens love it here all year round (no freezing winters). We just added a new chick coop inside the hens coop so the chicks are doubly protected. We live in a residential neighborhood but have more than our share of predators. In the past year I lost 2 beautiful hens to hawks, currently doing battle with an egg-thieving crow and once found a giant python hanging out in the nest boxes not to mention the chicken food loving rats. But it is all worth it for my lovelies.
Wendy: Here is some more photo's of my new girls, Babs and Bunty (from the Chicken Run movie). Enjoying their time outside their coop with my other girls. I got these 2 from a family that had to find another home for them because their dog didn't like them poor girls my dog loves to be around the chooks when I let them out in the afternoon.
Carrie: I had an unsettling experience with my little Araucana Hazel last week. I noticed that she appeared to be having some “hygiene” issues, so hubby and I caught her and put her in a large pan half filled with water and proceeded to help the little lady clean up a bit. When we lifted her out, we found a quarter size hole on the side of her bum and most of the feathers were gone. To our dismay, the hole was filled with maggots. “For better or for worse”, right? We looked at each other and said, “now what?” I got a bottle of hydrogen peroxide and we thoroughly cleaned the wound and had to use tweezers to get all of the maggots out, I would say there were at least 50 of them. I’m still grossed out thinking about it. Anyway, one more cleaning with the hydrogen peroxide and we coated with honey, which is antibacterial and antifungal with exceptional healing properties. Then we had to find a place to keep her safe from the other girls. So, little Hazel went to our “Chicken Hospital”, a newly repurposed location in our home, my son’s tiled shower with an improvised door made of pvc pipe and chicken wire. Shhhhh, he’s away at college, and we’ll have plenty of time to clean it up before his next visit home. Since hydrogen peroxide is harmful to healing skin, it should only be used the first time to clean a wound. From my nurse friend who is also a wound specialist, she gave me this recipe: 1 quart
sterile water (boil 5 min), 1 ½ tsp plain bleach (not concentrated), and ¼ tsp baking soda. This works well on humans too. Clean daily and reapply honey until it’s no longer raw and the dead tissue is gone. We kept her inside for 3 days, and it’s amazing how quickly she healed. Having her in the shower made for easy cleanup too.

Mari: Got this chick free with my order from McMurray hatchery. It's supposed to be an exotic of some sort but when I looked at all the chick pictures of their exotics not one came close to looking like this.... Thanks!

Update from Mari: I sent pic to hatchery and they said Egyptian Fayoumis 😊
Mark and Esther: Attached are pictures of my almost there coop and apiary. A bit over the top but we believe that if we are going to keep animals for food then we are obliged to give them the best life possible.

The coop is largely made from recycled timber and iron and to finish I have to install some gutters and a water tank so the birds always have fresh water.

The idea of putting the bees and chickens together works well as the chickens will eat any small hive beetles or wax moth larvae they lay eyes on and the high
fence of the run keeps balls and kids from knocking the hive. So far I have only seen one chicken try and eat a bee and I am sure that won’t happen again.

The coop design is one I got off the net and is for a Northern climate. To adjust for our South East Australian climate I have extra insulation in the roof and perches which can be spaced out for heat and closer in winter.

We are new to chickens and are still developing our flock and currently have two Barnevelder hens and five Light Brahma chicks. Our broody is an old light Sussex who is beyond her laying days but whilst she keeps going broody she will survive so to speak.
Shantel: Re: keeping chickens and ducks together. How to keep chickens out of duck pond. I've lost one already. It didn't drown but likely hypothermia got her instead. Head still above water but dead in pond... 😞

My Reply: Sorry to hear that. I think fencing may be the only way if the pond is in the same area and the chickens are voluntarily going in (another possibility is that the ducks are drowning the hens which can happen intentionally if they feel there is a shortage of food and/or there is a bit of bullying going on, or unintentionally if there is a drake trying to mate with your chickens). Ducks can fly easier than chickens so a fence shouldn't stop them getting to it, but hopefully would stop your chickens. If chickens are just falling in around the edge you could try sloping the pond at the sides to hopefully help them get themselves out again.

Carole: I would be interested to know whether other chicken keepers have had a similar problem to me.

I got Goldilocks a beautiful 20-week-old Gold Lace Orpington last October. All was well until early this year when she kept falling over and was unable to get up on her own. I took her to my local vet who thought she might have kidney or Mareks disease. I later spoke to another vet when she wasn't improving who agreed with the diagnosis and recommended I separate her from the other chuck as Mareks is infectious.

Not expecting her to survive I separated her out for a couple of weeks at the end of which she had improved quite considerably so I introduced her back to the others. She got rather badly bullied for a couple of days and then things started to settle down.

She does still have problems with her legs particularly her right one and can't jump any more and also has no movement in her right wing which makes me think she may have had a stroke. I would be interested to hear whether other people have had experiences like this.
She still hasn't laid and now seems to be taking on a cockerel's characteristics. There are 3 of the chickens that she likes to grab at the back of the neck and climb onto their backs that they're not at all keen. She also remains quite separate when they're out of the run almost as if she's standing guard and is now even practicing crowing.

I sent a picture to a Gold Laced Orpington breeder and he's convinced she/he's a cockerel and sadly she's making life pretty miserable for Amber my Buff Sussex who tends to be the target for her amorous intentions so I'm taking her back to the breeder who has told me they're difficult to sex.

Other people's views and experiences would be much appreciated. I will be sad to lose her but don't feel there's any other option. I would, however, be interested in other views if you're able to post my letter in your newsletter.

Kind regards, Carole (Ayling)