

Hen Health

Hen Treatments that don't require a prescription

Keeping hens does mean that you may have to consult a vet as and when required, but because hens are more livestock than pets (although we get just as attached) you need to be more realistic about how far you go. We try to help our hens to recover as much as possible, but ultimately tend to let nature take its course. We could not pay hundreds of pounds for surgery on a hen for example, but occasional antibiotic is fair enough... Here we list as many remedies as we have become aware of and we will update this list as we find more:

Tonic Food: Poorly hens can be encouraged to eat if offered a tin of mackerel in oil, mashed up with 2 pureed garlic cloves added.

Garlic Treatment: A general purpose treatment to boost hen health, help ward off mites and lice, colds etc. Roughly chop or liquidise 1 clove per hen and add to feed (many hens will eat it neat if offered).

ASPIRIN SOLUTION: Used as a general treatment for reducing distress conditions of hens including fever and listlessness which accompany many diseases. Dissolve five 325 mg aspirin tablets in one gallon of water. Offer this drink to the birds for the duration of an illness. The dosage rate is about 25 mg/lb body weight per day.

ASTRINGENT SOLUTION: This solution can be used to treat younger hens that show non-typical disease symptoms of poor growth. The solution can also be given to birds suffering from respiratory diseases that produce a large amount of mucus exudates (runny noses). This solution will help clear the mucus and allow it to be expelled easier. Two quarts of apple cider vinegar diluted into 100 gallons of water, or 4 teaspoons in a gallon. Offer this drink as the only drinking water source for two to three day intervals.

COPPER SULPHATE SOLUTION: Use this solution as a treatment for thrush in the mouth or crop. Dissolve 200 grams copper sulphate and half a cup of cider vinegar into 1 gallon of water then use this mixture by adding 30 milliliters per gallon as a drinking solution.

LAXATIVE SOLUTIONS

To flush the hen's digestive system of toxic substances.

Molasses Solution: Add 500 milliliters of molasses to 20 litres of water. Allow birds to drink this for up to 4 hours before removing.

Epsom Salt Solution: 500 grams Epsom Salt per 20 litres of water. Allow birds to drink this for up to 24 hours before removing.

Castor Oil Therapy: Dose individual birds with 15 millilitres castor oil.

Sucrose Solution: 300 grams of granulated sugar per 4 litres of water. This solution may be given as an energy treatment for weak chicks. Offer the solution as the only water source for the first 7-10 days. Clean the drinkers and replace with fresh solution at least once daily. The solution shown above contains eight percent sugar and approximately 2000 kilocalories per gallon.

STERILISING SOLUTIONS

These solutions will reduce or eliminate most disease organisms in water, drinkers, and water lines.

For Constant Use: 1 teaspoon chlorine bleach (sodium hypochlorite) in 5 gallons of drinking water. This solution provides 11 ppm chlorine for sanitizing. The birds will drink the water and not be harmed by drinking it. They may need a short time to become accustomed to this solution. A more dilute solution with half the above level of bleach can be offered for a few days before using the 11 ppm solution. Clean the waterers thoroughly each day to get the best effect.

Weekly Rinse Solution: 1 oz Chlorine Bleach in 6-8 gallons water. Rinse, soak, or expose equipment to this solution. Let stand at least one hour, then rinse with fresh water. This solution contains equivalent to 45 ppm chlorine. The procedure is most effective if conducted on a weekly basis. Remember, chlorine disinfectants are inactivated by organic matter. Clean all equipment well before using chlorine rinse solutions.