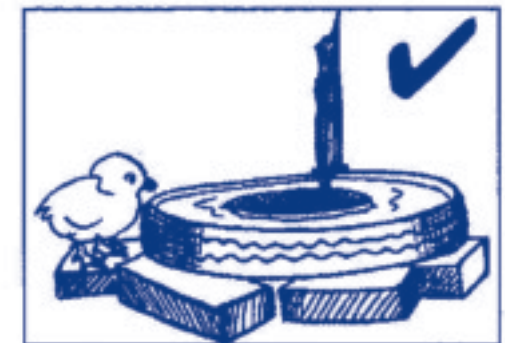
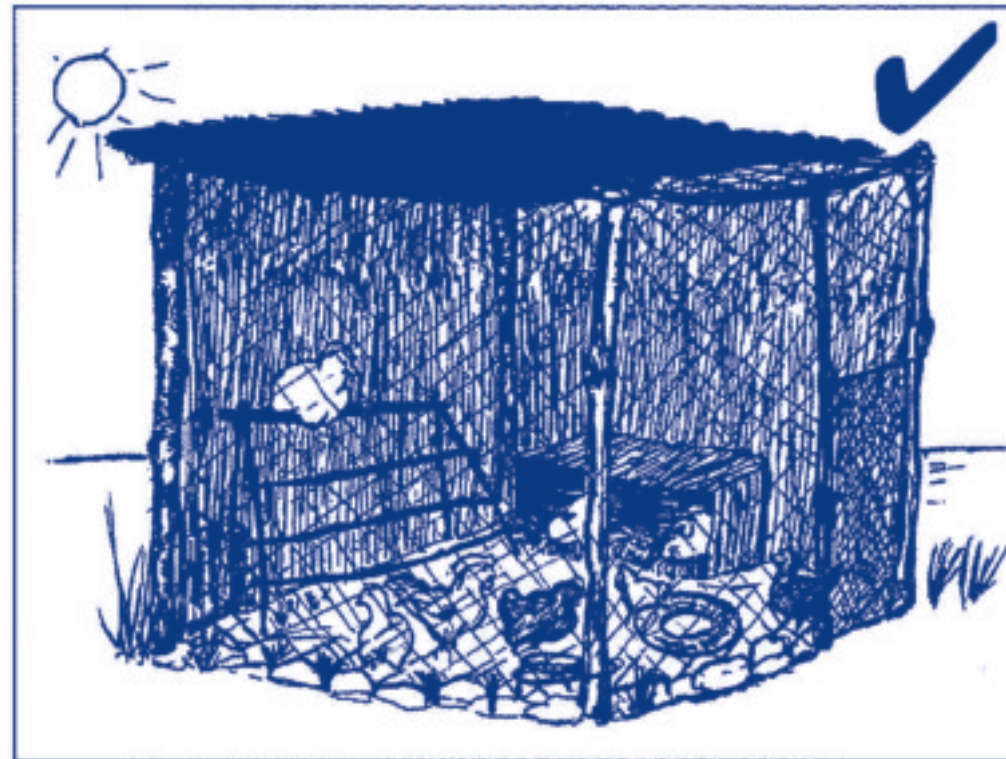
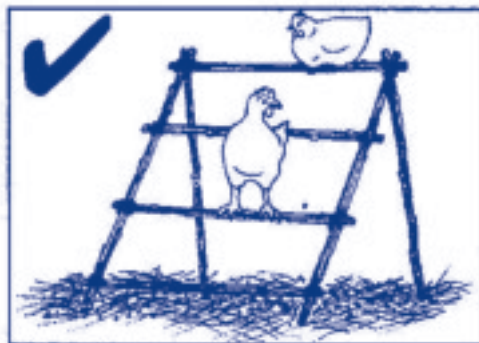
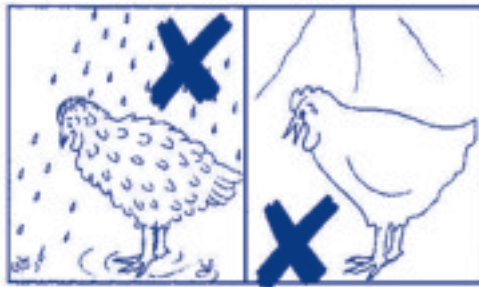




Issued by the National Council of SPCAs
P.O. Box 1320, Alberton 1450
Tel: 011 907 3590
Fax: 011 907 4013
E-mail: nspca@nspca.co.za

SPCA says...

TAKE CARE OF YOUR CHICKENS



- Young or baby chickens are called **CHICKS**.
- Adult female chickens are called **HENS**.
- Adult male chickens are called **ROOSTERS** or **COCKS**.

SHELTER AND CARE

- When chickens are kept in a cage, they must be protected from the weather – rain, hail, cold winds and direct sun.
- Very hot weather or cold, damp, wet weather can be dangerous for chickens. They can suffer and die. Even if they do not die they will not be as healthy and strong as they should be.
- In hot, humid areas the air should be able to pass through the cage to keep the birds cool. Ventilation is important for chickens.
- At least half of the cage must have a roof. (If the roof is made of metal it must be covered with grass or other material and then properly tied down to prevent the metal from getting too hot or too cold.) Two sides of the cage must be covered to protect the chickens from the rain, cold winds and the sun
- Chickens must have a warm, dry sleeping area. It is best to provide perches or branches for them to sleep on at night.
- Chickens in a cage cannot escape from other animals like dogs. Make sure that the cage is secure and that the chickens are protected from other animals.
- If one bird becomes sick or injured take it away and put it by itself in a safe and dry place. Give it very special care and food until it is well again. If the bird is very sick or badly injured it will be better to humanely slaughter the chicken.
- Never leave an injured chicken in a cage with other chickens. They may peck it until it dies.
- Small / weak chickens must be kept, fed and cared for separately.

BREEDING

- It takes about 21 days for the chicks to hatch from the eggs.
- There must be a warm, dry, protected area for a nesting box in which the hen can lay her eggs.
- Put some grass in the nesting box. This will keep the eggs clean and warm and help to prevent cracking.
- Often the hen will not leave the nest to search for food while she is sitting on eggs. Put food and water near her, where she can reach it.
- The nest should be near or on the ground once the chicks hatch so that they can get in and out safely.
- The hen will be very protective over her chicks. It is better to keep them separate from the other chickens until the chicks are big and strong. They must have water and food (Grower Mash or Chick Chick No 1) at all times.
- Never keep too many birds in a cage. They must have space to move around freely, and stretch their wings. It is best to keep chickens in small groups of about 20 as this will help prevent fighting and competition, even among the hens.
- Don't keep roosters together in the same cage or they may fight.
- Don't keep more roosters than hens or the hens will be injured and damaged by the roosters mating with them too often.
- One rooster for every 10 hens is enough.
- Roosters should be about the same size as the hens. If they are too much bigger they may injure the hens while mating.

WATER

- Chickens must always have clean, fresh water to drink.
- One chicken needs at least 100 ml of water to drink every day.
- In hot weather they need to drink more water to help keep them cool and keep their appetite.
- The water must be put in the shade to stop it from getting hot.
- To prevent the chickens from scratching sand and dirt into the water, raise the bowl from the ground.

Put it onto a few bricks or flat rocks.

- The side of the water bowl must be low enough for small chicks to reach the water but not so deep that they can drown.
- Tie the bowl to the side of the cage, or put a clean rock in the middle, so the water can't be tipped over and wasted.
- The water bowl must be cleaned and refilled every day.

FEED

- Chickens can eat mixtures of leftover food like mealie pap, bread, vegetables and maize. Commercial chicken food is very good – i.e. Laying Mash, Grower Mash or Chick Chick No1.
- Some food (e.g. hard pumpkin) will need to be cut into small pieces or cooked to make it soft enough for the chickens to eat. Chickens need a proper, mixed diet to stay healthy.
- If there are more than 10 chickens in the cage the food should be split into two containers, so that every bird can have a share. Ideally there should be a bowl of chicken food in the cage all the time.
- Raise the food bowl, or hang it from the roof (low enough for chicks to reach) to prevent chickens walking in the food.
- To produce strong, healthy eggs and chicks, hens must have calcium. If hens are not fed commercial layer rations then they should have access to limestone grit, oyster shells or small, regular quantities of bone meal (meat sawdust).
- Food must always be kept dry and be protected from the rain, or else it may go sour and will then be wasted.
- Bowls should be cleaned regularly and old / dirty food removed.

HYGIENE

- If chickens are kept in dirty cages this will make them sick or unhealthy.
- Cage floors must be cleaned at least once a week.
- Putting some grass on the floor will help to absorb the chickens' mess, especially if you put it under the sleeping perches. Old grass should be removed and new grass put in every week.
- Grass or bedding from the nest boxes must also be changed at least once a week.
- The cage floor should also be kept clean because chickens like to lie in the sand and roll in it (dust bath). Dust bathing helps to clean their feathers and control parasites like mites and lice.
- It is important that the floor of the cage is sloped so that excess water can run off, and the cage can keep dry.
- If water does collect in the cage, it is important to dig a furrow or ditch, leading out of the cage so that the water can drain out and the floor can dry.

SPCA says...
TAKE CARE OF
YOUR CHICKENS