

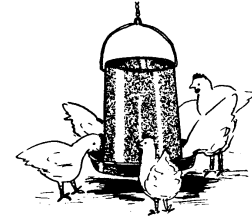


The University of Georgia

Cooperative Extension Service

College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences / Athens, Georgia 30602-4356

NOVEMBER 2008



BACKYARD FLOCK TIP . . .

MAINTAINING EGG QUALITY

Many small flock producers keep poultry for egg production. The recent increase in the interest in home grown products has made locally produced eggs more popular for many consumers. In addition, consumers are more quality conscious and more demanding of uniformity in products than ever before. Escalating costs for poultry feed during the past two years has increased the costs of egg production for all producers, small and large. Thus it is important that the quality of “home grown” eggs is maintained and that egg spoilage is minimized.

Sanitation is an important factor in maintaining egg quality. The exterior of the egg shell is usually clean and sterile when the egg is first laid. From the time the egg is laid, however, it is exposed to large numbers of microorganisms, which under certain conditions, can penetrate the egg shell and contaminate the egg. The result can be lowering of the quality of the egg and eventual loss of the egg as an edible product. There are several steps that can be taken to assure egg quality on the farm:

- **Keep nest clean.** Maintaining clean nesting material will reduce microbial exposure when the egg is first laid. Replace nesting material as needed. Clean nesting material will also encourage the hen to use the nest rather than laying the egg on dirt or in weeds.
- **Collect eggs frequently.** Eggs should be collected at least daily and preferably twice a day to prevent breakage and possible contamination from fecal material and dirt. The longer eggs are left in the hen house or pen, the more likely they are to be broken and exposed to bacteria.
- **Egg washing.** Washing the eggs after collection can also improve egg quality if done properly. Water temperature for washing is very important. Eggs should be washed in water that is warmer than the eggs. Warm eggs washed in cool water will contract and draw bacteria into the egg. Temperatures ranging from 100 to 120 degrees F. are recommended. Wash water can become contaminated if used too

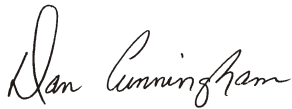
PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State College, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating.
The Cooperative Extension service officers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability
An equal opportunity/affirmative action organization committed to a diverse work force..

long, therefore, the wash water should be changed as dirt and fecal material build up in the solution.

- **Egg drying.** Once the eggs are washed they should be dried as soon as possible. Moisture provides a favorable environment for bacterial growth and a method of microbial entrance through the egg shell. A **clean** dry cloth or air drying can be used as methods of drying eggs.
- **Use clean packaging materials.** If egg flats or cartons are used for storage, these materials should be clean and free of contaminated matter such as egg yolk and albumen.
- **Storage conditions.** After washing and drying, eggs should be stored within appropriate temperature and humidity conditions. The appropriate temperature is 45-55 degrees F. and relative humidity between 60-80 %.

Adhering to these basic principles of egg handling will improve the quality of eggs for consumption and reduce the costs of producing eggs for the home flock.



Dan L. Cunningham
Extension Coordinator

Extension County Coordinator/Agent

“Your local County Extension Agent is a source of more information on this subject.”