

For further clarification on accepted animal husbandry practices for poultry, please contact the Vermont Agency of Agriculture's Animal Health Section at (802) 828-2421

If you suspect animal cruelty or neglect please visit:

[www.ReportAnimalCruelty.com](http://www.ReportAnimalCruelty.com)

Or call  
**(877) 9-HUMANE**



## **The Vermont Humane Federation's Animal Cruelty Response Coalition**

**A state-wide network of professionals coordinating Vermont's efforts to prevent and respond to animal cruelty through communication, education, and training.**

### Members include:

- The VT Humane Federation
- The VT Veterinary Medical Association
- The VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets
- The VT League of Cities & Towns
- The VT Farm Bureau
- The Green Mountain Dairy Farmers Cooperative
- The VT Sheriffs Association
- The VT Police Chiefs Association
- The VT Constables Association
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- The VT Agency of Human Services

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# **Caring for Chickens, Geese & Ducks**



## **Vermont's Recommendations and Requirements**

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# Poultry: The Basics

## Terminology

**Chickens:** Female-Hen, Male-Rooster, Young-Chick

**Ducks:** Female-Duck, Male-Drake, Young-Duckling

**Geese:** Female-Goose, Male-Gander, Young-Gosling

## Animal Care Practices

### Feed and Water

- Fresh, clean water in clean containers should be accessible at all times. Daily cleaning is recommended.
- A complete balanced diet, designed for your type of poultry and its life stage, should be available at all times.
- Provide your poultry oyster shell or coarse-ground limestone to help maintain their calcium levels, and grit to help them digest their food.

### Shelter

- Poultry should be provided with shelter that protects them. Make sure the coop is free of drafts during the winter and well ventilated in the summer.
- Poultry can die of heat exhaustion in the summer and suffer from frostbitten combs in the winter.
- Fans can be utilized in the summer and heat lamps in the winter to keep the temperature over 32°F; if the water in the coop is not frozen, the temperature is okay.

# Poultry Care (cont)

## Shelter (continued)

- Spread a 6-inch layer of shavings or saw dust on the floor to absorb droppings and give the birds a place to take a dust bath. Newspaper is not recommended for brooders and hay is best for ducklings.
- Proper ventilation in the poultry house will minimize ammonia odor and reduce moisture and disease organisms. Caked or wet litter should be removed as soon as it forms to keep the house clean and dry.
- You can protect your flocks from predators by keeping them penned within good, sturdy fencing; remember to close the coop door each evening after your flock goes to roost.

## Additional Recommendations

- Check your flock daily to spot diseases or parasites. For more information about identifying, preventing and treating poultry diseases and parasites, contact your local veterinarian.
- Proper biosecurity is essential for preventing disease introduction in your flock. For most flocks, diseases are rare as long as the flock doesn't come into contact with other flocks. Keep new birds separated from your flock for 30 days. Disinfect any shared garden tools, lawn equipment, or poultry supplies prior to use.



# Common Concerns

## Appearance of Bird

Thin (feel the breastbone to see if it is prominent); unkempt feathers (healthy birds keep their feathers clean); frostbitten combs and wattles (red skin under chicken's chin); feather picking; abrasions because of overcrowding.

## Housing Conditions

Overcrowding can be fatal in chickens; conditions that are too hot or too cold can jeopardize the safety of the birds.

## Behavior

Dull, minimally responsive; not interested in surroundings; open-mouthed breathing if respiratory diseases are present, if conditions are too hot, or when stressed.

If any of these elements are present, call a veterinarian to examine the animals.

