



#68 SAFE CARE AND HANDLING OF CHICKENS



Photograph Courtesy of University of California 4-H Archives

Chickens are believed to have been domesticated first in China and India about 3,000 to 5,000 years ago. Later, chickens were brought to North America by Spanish and English explorers.

In the United States and Canada, adult male chickens are called roosters. Female chickens older than one year are called hens while those younger than one year are known as pullets.

Safe Care and Handling of Chickens

- Approach your chicken in a calm and deliberate manner. Quick movements may startle your bird and cause it injury as it flees from you.
- Always protect your chicken(s) from potential predators such as dogs, raccoons, foxes, skunks, and hawks.
- Chickens are omnivores, meaning they eat plants and animals such as seeds and insects.
- Make sure your chicken is able to easily reach fresh feed and water at all times.
- To remove a chicken from a pen, cage, or coop, turn the bird so it exits the enclosure while facing the enclosure door. Likewise, return a chicken to its pen, cage, or coop so it enters the enclosure while facing the enclosure door.
- Be aware that chicken pens, cage, and coops often have sharp edges and enclosure doors can act as pinch points.
- If scratched or seriously pecked by a chicken, notify your group leader, parent, or guardian. Wash the wound with soap and water and cover with a clean bandage. Seek medical attention if the wound is large/deep or appears to be infected.
- To avoid slipping or falling, wear shoes with slip resistant soles and step carefully when feeding and watering your chicken(s) or while cleaning a chicken coop.
- During hot weather, assure your chicken has access to shade and/or areas of good air circulation. Alternatively, during cold weather assure your chicken has access to shelter.
- When showing your chicken at a poultry event, wear appropriate clothing such as a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and closed-toed shoes. Always tuck your shirt in and tie your shoe laces.
- Be alert for vehicular traffic and follow safe pedestrian rules when attending poultry events.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water after handling a chicken or any other animal.