

Lucky Hens Rescue

Hot Weather Help Sheet

Shade

Providing shade from the strong sun is very important. If the hens are free ranging, they will seek out shady spots under bushes etc. If they are to be confined to the run on a hot day, you can provide shade by draping the run with an old sheet or duvet cover. In exceptionally hot weather, if you spray the sheet with water, it will help cool things down even more.

Hens will try to seek shade in all sorts of interesting places. Be extra careful that they don't find themselves trapped in a shed, cold frame, greenhouse or a bucket or plant pot that may tip over.

Water

It is absolutely crucial that there is plenty of water available. If you have to be out during the day, it is a good idea to provide an extra drinker (or two) so that they can drink freely. Adding a handful of ice cubes will keep it cooler for longer. Chopping up cucumber or grapes and putting it in a dish of water will encourage them to take in more fluid, as they 'bob' for the pieces. Place drinkers in the shade to minimise evaporation. Galvanized drinkers can get extremely hot.

Bald chickens

If your hen has bald patches, they will be vulnerable to sunburn. A bit of factor 50 suncream applied to the area will protect it.

Parasites

Summer is the time when red mite are at their most active, and a hot hen will be vulnerable. It is a good idea to have a strict regime of cleaning the housing with a product such as Poultry Shield. Diatom or red mite powder can be applied to the bird as a preventative, and diatom can be used in the housing.

If you have a broody hen, she will be particularly vulnerable to attack by red mite, so extra vigilance is crucial.

Normal behaviour in hot weather

- Your hen may pant to lose heat, this is perfectly normal
- Your hen may stretch out and hold her wings out to the side in order to lose heat. This too is perfectly normal
- Your hen will eat less and may produce fewer eggs
- Your hen will sleep more during the day
- Signs that your hen might not be coping with the heat
- Floppy comb
- Excessive panting
- Collapse

Emergency treatment

- Syringe water carefully into beak
- Wrap in a cool damp towel. Don't stress the hen further by plunging her into cold water
- Place in a cool dark room

Other tips

Taking safety and the fox into account, it might be worth letting them free range earlier in the day, when the air is cooler and the sun is lower in the sky or in the evening. If you close them in at night, you could open the coop door earlier than usual to allow them to eat whilst it is cooler, again, bearing safety issues in mind. Corn. As this has heating properties, it might be as well not to feed this during excessively hot weather.

Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT!