

# Lucky Hens Rescue

## Broody Hens Help Sheet

### **She's going through something which is completely natural**

The pure selfish nuisance of it is that you often have to step in to get the girl back to 'normal'. During the broodiness, they will stay inside the nesting box and will have a peck at you when you retrieve the egg, or eggs from underneath. She will only leave the nest once a day to eat & drink & poo! . Broody droppings usually come out in one large, very bad-smelling glob. Broody hens are most likely to happen in spring but can happen at any time throughout the year and is especially likely in the hen's second year.

The problem lays that it's often in very hot weather and it seems they hardly go out to eat or drink, then gets overheated, which could ultimately lead to you losing her.

Also during this time, when they do go out, the other chickens will get quite annoyed and have a go at her. Often you will find a broody hen has lost some feathers through the others basically, beating her up!

The whole pen is somewhat disturbed and although the egg laying would not appear to be affected, it can be a very unhappy camp!

Here are a few things you can do to help -

Pick up and physically take her to the watering bowl. On a few occasions I've held the hen and dipped her beak into the water so she has no option but to drink. It's not cruel for being kind. If she doesn't drink she'll De-hydrate and become very unwell.

### **Don't get into the habit of putting food in the nesting box This will only stop her needing to go outside when hungry**

## Broody Hen Running For Cover

In some very difficult cases, you may have to segregate her for a while. The other one, which I haven't tried is to shut her out of the Hen House, put her in an isolation pen with just a shelter. Somewhere where she can't spend all day getting hot.

Exactly how long broodiness can go on for varies a lot - anywhere from one to even four or five weeks.

Broody hens do not lay eggs and they also take up a whole nest box. Many breeds of chickens have had the instinct to go broody bred out of them so they will produce more eggs. We do not always want to have our hens hatching eggs.

Although it is perfectly natural for hens to be like this (similar to dogs and cats), all they want to do is have some baby chicks. Perhaps they are 'just chickens' and have very small brains, but to them it's their life and routines and we have to work around this. A nuisance maybe, but a worrying time and a chance for us to help nature out a little.

## Things That Might Help

When broody her body temperature will rise and she will obviously want to get herself comfortable ready for several weeks of being on the nest. The main ideas for stopping broodys are centred around stopping her getting herself too comfortable. Sometimes it can be as simple as removing her from the nests several times a day, but a determined broody can be hard to dissuade.

To stop a broody early there are several techniques. Sometimes just putting her in a place where she can not see her old nest and keeping her there for 4 days will do the job. She should, of course, have feed and water. For the more stubborn hen, a wire-bottomed cage is necessary. The airflow up through the wire keeps her underside cool and after a few days she will usually give up.

**Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT!**