Winter Housing for Poultry
Tips for Overwintering Your Birds

- February 9, 2017 -

Presented by:
Alex Needham
(Radical Root Farm)
Nick Batchelder
(Midnight Sun Farm)

Hosted by:
Food Animal Concerns Trust
(FACT)

Photo courtesy of Midnight Sun Farm
Introductions

Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) is a national nonprofit organization that advocates for the safe and humane production of meat, milk, and eggs.

FACT’s Fund-a-Farmer Project awards grants and facilitates peer-to-peer farmer education to increase the number of animals that are raised humanely in this country.
Our Presenters

Alex Needham – Radical Root Farm
  • Libertyville, IL
  • 2014 Fund-a-Farmer grant recipient

Nick Batchelder – Midnight Sun Farm
  • Harvard, IL
  • 2013 Fund-a-Farmer grant recipient
Radical Root Farm

Overwintering Chickens
Who we are

A 13 acre certified organic family farm in Libertyville, IL

CSA, Market and Farm stand

We raise diversified vegetables, 600 pastured chickens for eggs, honey
Overwintering Chickens

- Feed
- Water
- Shelter
- Electric
Feed

• 16 % layer ration
  – Can raise protein levels in winter.
• Additional items
  – Oyster shells
  – Grit
Water

- 275 gallon tote
  - 1 Gal. Vinegar
    Every Month
- Bucket heater
Water (Cont.)

- Bell waters
- Heat tape
Water (Cont.)
Other Options (Smaller Flocks, etc.)
Shelter

- Hoop house
  - Space
  - Outdoor access
- Nest boxes
- Straw
Fencing

- More than one set
- Solar Electric
Electric

• Supplemental lighting
• Electric needs
Brooding in the winter
Different from Layers

- Supplemental heat
- Different Feed
- Different Bedding
Finished product
Egg Washing in Winter
Thank you!
Keeping Chickens in Winter: An Overview

Nick Batchelder
Midnight Sun Farm
Harvard, IL
Winter Egg Production

• What changes in production should I expect?
• Using supplemental lighting
• Storing your eggs
• Molting
  – When will it happen?
  – What will it look like?
  – How will it affect productivity?
Scheduling Your Flock

• Heritage vs. hybrid breeds
  – Hybrid layers for predictable laying and profitability
  – Heritage breeds if slow winter production is desired

• Think about your market and where the eggs are going to go
  – Farmers markets? Wholesale? CSA? Other?
Starting chicks in the fall

- When to start chicks for peak production
- Housing/brooder boxes
- Supplemental heat and protection
- Ensure good ventilation, draft-free, dry
Chick housing in cold weather

- 250 watt red bulbs
- Plywood
- 4x4
- Raise to shoulder height of birds
- Good pine shavings for bedding, not cedar

Brooder box outside:

Brooder box inside:
Winter Feeding

- Increased carbohydrate levels (%15 protein)
- Maintain all other nutritional levels for laying productivity
- Withholding feed and water combined with low light levels can trigger a molt cycle
Winter watering
(aka It’s always fun to go to the clerk at the Fleet Farm and ask where the chicken nipples are)

- Parts list: 2 inch pvc, epoxy, nipples
- Watch for puddling and wet areas around the waterer
Winter watering
Other solutions

- Pans
- Fountains
- More frequent refills
- Fewer problems with freezing
Predators!
Weasels!

• **Signatures:**
  – Stockpiling
  – Neck biting/ breaking
  – Tunneling
  – Can fit in any hole that will allow the average thumb!

• **Mitigation:**
  – Hardware cloth/ Exclusion
Skunks!

• Signatures:
  – Beheading/ messy kill
  – Strong smell, look for tracks/ sloppy burrowing

• Mitigation:
  – Exclusion, hardware cloth, live traps, dogs
Coyotes!

- Signatures:
  - Tracks
  - Howling/ yipping
  - Feather piles
  - Missing birds

- Mitigation:
  - Exclusion
  - Hardware cloth
  - Electric fence
  - Live traps/ snap traps
  - Dogs
Possums!

- **Signatures:**
  - Messy kills
  - Good climbers
  - Tracks

- **Mitigation:**
  - Exclusion
  - Live traps
  - Dogs
Hawks! Owls!

• Signatures:
  – Beheading
  – Evisceration/ spread-eagle carcass
  – Feather piles

• Mitigation:
  – Exclusion
- Chicken wire keeps chickens in
- Hardware cloth keeps predators out
Thank you!
Please type your questions!

Photo taken at Radical Root Farm