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The Place Where Animal Lovers Come Together | Summer 2009

### Featured Story

"I thought it would be neat to have our own fresh eggs...today I own 14 chickens."  
- Steve Scherrer

**THIS QUARTER'S**  
flock tips:  
Preparation Today for  
a Healthy Tomorrow



**Product Spotlight**

## Featured Story | A Thriving Flock that Started Small



Steve Scherrer's initial venture into chicken ownership was purely practical—he had heard that guinea hens help control ticks. So living next to a state park teeming with wildlife, it seemed like a reasonable solution to an inevitable problem. "But after I got the hens, it was kind of a natural evolution to have a few chickens. I thought it would be neat to have our own fresh eggs," recalls Scherrer.

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## Hot Weather Tips for Raising Poultry

**They say raising poultry is all about feed, water, heat and light. But in the summer, beating the heat is a top priority. Severe heat stress can affect egg quality, size and hatchability. It can also increase the rate of mortality. Here are some tips:**



### Keep Birds Cool

- Even free-range birds need access to shade. If there is none, create some.
- Ventilation is critical. Make sure nothing obstructs the flow of fresh air, and don't allow ammonia to accumulate.
- Use a misting fan or fogging system in a well-ventilated area.
- Avoid unnecessary activity. Don't disturb birds during the hottest time of day. Digestion generates body heat, so feed during the coolest hours.
- Avoid overcrowding. To instantly reduce the heat, reduce the number of birds in the house.

### Water Is Essential

- Provide unlimited access to fresh, clean water. It's essential.
- Position water containers in the shade. If water is too hot (or too cold) chickens won't drink enough and egg production will suffer.
- Adjust waterers to shoulder height to help keep litter dry.
- Baby turkeys sometimes need extra coaxing to drink water. One trick is to put a few bright-colored marbles in their water. As they peck at the marbles, their beaks will slip into the water. Eventually, they'll get the hang of it. (Remove marbles before birds get big enough to swallow them.)
- Grown ducks need access to water one or two inches deep in order to groom themselves. While swimming water is not a requirement, fresh drinking water is.

### Keep Water Clean

- If food, bedding or feces gets into drinking water, change the water.
- Ducklings and goslings love to play in water and will quickly soil it. Use a dispenser that allows only their bills to enter. Put distance between feed and water dispensers to prevent cross contamination.
- Germs multiply fast in summer heat. Disinfect incubators, feeders, water containers and other equipment regularly, particularly between broods.

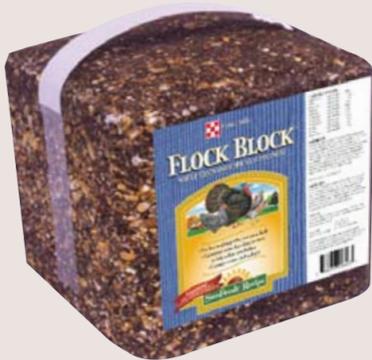
### Signs of Trouble

- Heat-stressed birds consume less feed, so meat-type chickens (i.e., broilers) grow more slowly and hens produce fewer eggs.
  - Birds don't have sweat glands so they cool themselves by panting, which can alter their electrolyte balance. If you suspect heat stress, ask your veterinarian about adding electrolytes to water.
  - Telltale signs of an unhealthy chicken:
    - less active than the rest of the flock
    - comb is pale and limp (the comb is a good barometer of health)
    - breast is concave and the keel bone becomes prominent
    - liquid diarrhea (versus a semisolid green and white splotch, which is normal)
    - unusual breathing or wheezing (some panting is normal in hot weather, but not to excess)
- If one of your chickens exhibits any of these symptoms, talk to your veterinarian.

Keep in mind, birds experience a major moult (shedding feathers) in late summer, so don't be surprised if they temporarily devote most of their calories to replacing their feathers and maintaining body temperature instead of producing eggs. Be sure to provide a good quality feed during this time. Have a great summer!

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## Get to Know Flock Block SunFresh® Recipe



Ever heard the term "pecking order?" It literally comes from chickens because they establish social dominance through a "pecking order," a natural behavior in which status determines which birds eat first and have right-of-way privileges. However, excessive pecking can get out of control. This is referred to as cannibalism.

But there's a product that can help. Flock Block SunFresh® Recipe is a whole grain enrichment supplement that encourages natural pecking instincts to help reduce cannibalism.

- For free-ranging poultry and game birds
- Contains oyster shell and grit
- Available in a 25 lb block

Cannibalism can be difficult to stop once it begins so prevention is the best and most successful treatment. This can be achieved by not crowding the birds, keeping light levels reduced, providing adequate feeder space and ensuring proper nutrition through a well balanced ration, such as Purina Mills Family Flock products. And don't forget Flock Block SunFresh® Recipe.

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### Beautiful Birds



"The more I got exposed to chickens, the more I realized there were many varieties. There are some absolutely beautifully marked birds," says the freelance graphic designer who lives on three acres in "ruripolitan" St. Louis, Missouri.

"It really got to be fun when I got a design project that featured chickens. I had no idea where to find show quality poultry, but I got in touch with a licensed poultry judge who raises champion White Rocks," says Scherrer. "Then I attended a competition, bringing along a professional photographer." That was nine years ago, and Steve has been growing his flock ever since.

"Today I own 14 chickens—everything from late spring chicks to full-grown layers that are laying regularly. I have Bantam Cochins, Bantam Leghorns, full-size Ameraucanas—and a couple of mutts," laughs Scherrer.

### More Feathered Friends

A previously unknown zoning restriction surfaced a couple of years, almost costing him his flock. But the code was ultimately revised, much to Scherrer's relief. He has since added a peacock and a pair of turkeys to his menagerie, a male Bronze who is just getting big enough to strut and play, and a Royal Palm female who is supplying them with eggs.

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**Hurry! You could still win the Fanciest & Funniest photo contest. Send in your finest photo of your fanciest bird struttin' his stuff and you could win 12 free bags of SunFresh® poultry feed, a \$150 value. But hurry, contest ends August 31, 2009.**



**Enter Now!**