



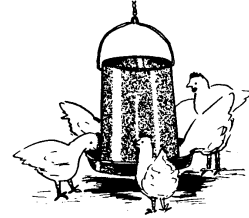
The University of Georgia

Cooperative Extension Service

College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences / Athens, Georgia 30602-4356

JANUARY 2007

BACKYARD FLOCK TIP . . .



FEEDING THE BACKYARD FLOCK IN COLD WEATHER

Because of the long, hot, humid summers we experience in Georgia, it is natural that when questions of feed quality and the feeding of poultry are discussed, more emphasis is given to problems encountered during the summer months. However, feed problems can also occur in the winter and these need to be reviewed. During the summer, warm temperatures and high humidity tend to make feed go out of condition more quickly. It is not uncommon for feed to become damp, with visible or invisible mold growth. Clumping is common and the feed may take on an objectionable odor. Insect infestation may also occur.

By contrast, when winter weather is reasonably clear and dry, poultry feed is much more stable. However, during periods of dampness it is extremely important to make sure the backyard flock is always provided with fresh feed. While low temperatures will prevent the feed from going out of condition rapidly, there are a number of mold that tend to proliferate more rapidly at low temperatures. Some of these, especially *fusarium*, can produce a range of mycotoxins which are harmful to the bird. Thus, protecting feed from humidity is just as important in the winter as in the summer.

With their feather coat, birds have much more resistance to cold than to hot temperatures. However, during periods of low temperature, the bird will need to eat more in order to generate adequate body heat. For this reason, attention should be given to how much feed we provide to the backyard flock. It is never a good idea to overfeed, as the feed not consumed may become damp and go out of condition. However, we need to make sure that the flock has adequate feed to continue to produce meat or eggs and at the same time maintain a healthy body temperature. The ideal situation is to have just a small amount of the previous days feed remaining in the feeder when it's time to add more.

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“Your local County Extension Agent is a source of more information on this subject.”

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