



“Facing facts about droppings”.

Why we clean those coops!

By D. Robinson

Droppings are end products of digestion, seen in two different forms. One is firm, well organized, grayish or greenish gray in color and capped with a deposit of white urates (urine) from the kidneys. The other is without form, semi-solid in consistency, yellowish brown or mustard color, and often contains bubbles of air.

Dropping from chickens contain millions of germs all the time. This is because thousands of bacteria live in the intestinal tract. In a healthy flock these germs are not harmful in normally and their presence is normal.

Even though droppings are not harmful under normal conditions, they should be removed from your coops, cages and runs. If you sprinkle these areas with lime occasionally, during warm weather it will prevent flies from depositing their eggs. Flies not only spread disease germs, but become the host to one of the most important tapeworms in poultry.

Disposing of droppings can be a problem. If you have a small flock of birds it's fairly easy to bag the droppings. I know people that buy bagged droppings to use on their gardens and even have had them come and scrape and rake my coop floors for free droppings. If you have a large flock of birds it's not as easy to dispose of good sized loads of droppings. The recommended solution is to have a dropping pit or an area at least 200 yard away from your birds. If you layer the droppings, adding lime often and covering with plastic this will keep flies from laying those eggs and spreading disease. You can add lawn shavings and leaves and make a great batch of fertilizer for your garden. Check with your neighbors, they might be happy to have some of this good fertilizer for their rose bushes or flower beds.

When you have an outbreak of disease, the droppings should be regarded as a source of infection, except in cases of respiratory diseases such as colds, CRD, bronchitis, etc, although droppings might be a mechanical carrier if chickens have access to the droppings.

All of us that have raised chicks have been taught how important it is to keep our brooder clean of chick droppings. If you have had a case of coccidiosis then you need to spend more time cleaning out this confined area. Chicks get bored, are very active and spend a lot of time pecking and scratching around in their homes. Even if you raise your chicks on a wire floor, wet dropping sometimes stick to the wire. An old veterinarian friend believes wet droppings are so active with bacteria that chicks picked up diseases very quickly compared to dry droppings. Countless numbers of oocysts (coccidian eggs) are discharged daily into the intestines. Roundworm eggs and tapeworm segments are passed in the droppings, emphasizing the need for clean areas for our birds.

Some parasite eggs remain alive for one or two years so it's important to remove waste matter far enough away from any area you're planning to run your chickens.