

Summer Lovin'

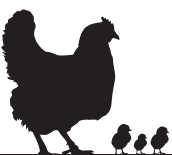
THE CHICKEN HEALTH CHECK

The key to ensuring your chickens remain happy and healthy this summer is to examine them regularly, so that any changes in your birds' condition are noticed and acted upon promptly. The chicken health check list below will help ensure that your chickens stay healthy and happy this summer.

Each morning it is recommended to **'walk the flock'** when you let your birds out - as you move amongst them, watch how they move and check that they are all alert and feeding. You will quickly get to know what is normal for each bird, and what isn't; that way you will spot any injuries or illness and be able to deal with it without delay.

Every couple of weeks you should get **'hands-on'** and examine each bird. Hold your chicken firmly and get an idea if you think she may have gained or lost weight - there is no need to weigh each bird, just an idea is fine.

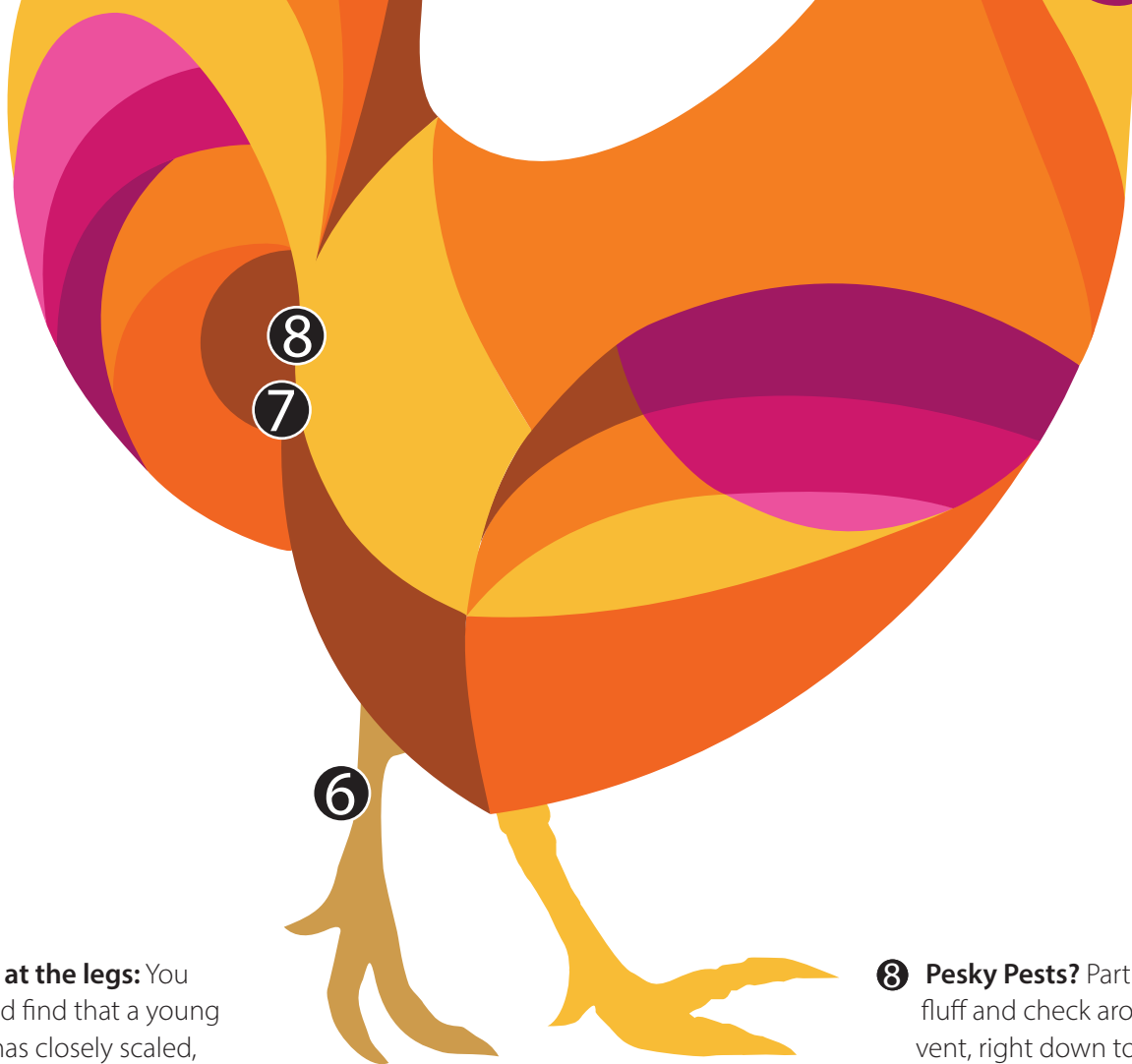
- 1 Examine the eyes:** Start at the top and check both eyes are open, bright and have no bubbles.
- 2 Notice the nostrils:** Both nostrils, at the top of the beak, should be clear with no snot or bubbles.
- 3 Monitor the mouth:** Open the beak gently and check inside - the mouth should be clear and no white deposits caused by canker.
- 4 Check the crop:** The crop is found on the right hand side of the chest; this should be full in the evening and empty in the morning, you will usually feel a bit of feed in there. You should be concerned if the crop is very hard or your bird's breath is smelly.
- 5 Fettle the feathers:** Point of lay pullets (16-20 weeks of age) will have soft feathers and you will be able to feel new ones growing through underneath their plumage - they go through 5 changes of 'clothes' before getting their adult 'wardrobe'. Check all birds for bald patches, signs of pecking or any obvious injuries.



NET TEX

01283 524222 sales@net-tex.co.uk
www.nettexpoultry.com

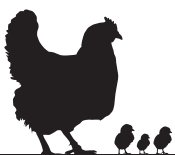




- 6 Look at the legs:** You should find that a young bird has closely scaled, smooth legs, warm to the touch and no obvious injuries to the legs or palms under the foot. An older bird will have much coarser scales.
- 7 View the vent:** Now down to the business end. Tuck her head under your arm and get her tail up in the air, you will see a lot of fluff under her tail. Press the flats of your fingers against the fluff directly under her tail and you will be able to feel two pointy bones sticking out – these are her pelvic bones or pin bones. If they are about 2cm apart, she is still young and not yet ready to lay; about 4 to 5cm gap and she is probably already in lay or about to start. Just above these bones you will see her vent deep in the fluff – it may be pulsing, this is normal. A small dry vent about 1cm across indicates that she is about a month away from laying eggs. A moist vent, about 3 to 4cm across means that she's mature and ready to lay. Make sure the vent area is kept clean to prevent fly-strike.

- 8 Pesky Pests?** Part all the fluff and check around the vent, right down to the skin to see if there are any lice or mites scurrying around at the base of the feathers. You are looking to have a healthy hen with no parasites and a nice clean vent.

Top Tip: If your chickens are not keen on being handled wait until after dark, when they are more relaxed, to complete the health check. When the birds have been roosting for about half an hour, gently remove them from the coop and then examine them. It's also good to be happy handling chickens so that you feel confident enough to do a health check on any new birds before you buy them.



NET TEX

01283 524222 sales@net-tex.co.uk
www.nettexpoultry.com

