

CONCERNING POULTRY



THE CHICKEN PHARMACY

FIRST-AID KIT FOR CHICKENS

By: Elly Vogelaar

In the 1880s, the town of Petaluma (California) became famous as a poultry town with highly productive Single Comb White Leghorn chicken and was known as the "World's Egg Basket." Even after the Great Recession the town continued to serve as the home to a record 6 million hens. And if a town has enough chickens, the birds rate their own drug store. The Chicken Pharmacy Petaluma was started in 1923 by James Keyes and was the world's only pharmacy devoted solely to poultry. In 1989, the last remaining hatchery in Petaluma closed, so this is all history now. The photo above is labeled "**Petaluma, California. In the chicken pharmacy, 1942. Photographer Russell Lee**". Source: *United States Farm Security Administration and Office of War Information (FSA-OWI)*.

FIRST-AID KIT FOR CHICKENS

With no more "chicken pharmacies" around, we have to call our vet if our chickens are not well. However, with a basic first-aid kit for your chickens, you can treat many minor illnesses and injuries at home. So, to be prepared for the unexpected, I asked our expert author Monique de Vrijer what she would advise us to store in such a first-aid kit.

Monique thought these things to be the most important:

In the bird shelter where I work (the Rotterdam bird shelter [Vogelklas Karel Schot](#). Red.) the things we take first and foremost from the closet as a first-aid are a heat source, ORS (oral rehydration solution) and Convalescence Support (CS) van ®Royal Canin.



So my first piece of advice is to see to it that you have some kind of heat source. I find the ®Elstein ceramic infrared heaters (consistent zoned heat without the visible light) one of the best electric heat sources. (In the bird shelter we have warm air blowers though.) An empty cage, foldable wire dog crate (bench) or a pet carrier will come in handy to



isolate a sick chicken. The heat source will provide beneficial warmth.



Next come ORS and CS, and – if the bird will not eat or drink – something to administer it with; a 60 ml syringe without the needle will do fine.

Even though it will not be needed often, things may happen and then you're glad that you have it, it does not perish, so just handy to have it at hand:

Gauze dressing pads, roll gauze, adhesive tape, self stick elastic bandage such as Vetrax and a pair of scissors. Whether it's to stop a bleeding or to support a wing with a kind of sling you construct with it, it's just a Jack-of-all-trades, because you can do almost anything with it. Wounds can always be rinsed with tap water, it works fine.

Right: This chicken had a serious head wound that would not stop bleeding. Photo: Pauline van Schaik.



I also find @Bach's rescue remedy really valuable and I have used it often, having convinced myself that it really works, especially in shock and stress situations. To me, homeopathic Arnica (internally) is also indispensable; life-saving and very useful in shock situations, but also when something caused the animal to clap or get caught by someone. Do not forget that certain situations may cause a chicken to get in shock (think of a stray dog rushing into your garden chasing a chicken, or a bird of prey, or a fox) and that chicken may actually die from that stress if you, for example, pick the chicken up, which may just be the one thing that is too much for the chicken.



In my opinion, with this you have a perfect First-aid kit for chickens.

You could consider adding tweezers. Maybe you ask yourself, for what? But fly eggs, maggots, dirt etc. are easily removed from wounds with it. A thermometer can also be useful.



Vitamins; painkillers; wound care; eye ointment; products against scaly leg mite, worms, coccidiosis etc. are all handy to have, but they can also be purchased if needed. Whether it is Sunday or after closing time, if you really need it, there is

always a way to get it. These products always have a shelf life date, which makes it difficult.

It is a good thing to inquire about veterinarians, breeders and, for example, children's farms or small animal clubs in your surroundings. When push comes to shove, you know



where you can go with your questions or emergencies, and maybe they can even help you straight away with the things that are needed. Include a paper with the phone number of a local vet in your first-aid box. By the way, in my house I always have common medicinal clay, which is also ideal for wound care and protection of the wound, and when newly bought, it will not spoil the first few years.



Editor Dirk de Jong, on request, supplemented with the following:



For wound care I lately have a pot of honey in my first-aid kit. It is an old and proven tool, even recommended by veterinarians, also in Belgium. Since the ancient times, honey has been known to possess antimicrobial property as well as wound-healing activity and its immunomodulatory property is relevant to wound repair too. Especially recommended for wounds that are not easy cured and infected with troublesome bacteria.

Granular charcoal helps control watery droppings. Charcoal promotes good digestion and absorbs any toxic substances present in the intestine. When your chickens have watery poop or diarrhoea, mix some natural charcoal crumbles into the feed or grit during a few days until the chickens produce solid droppings again. Note: Diarrhoea will also cause dirty vent feathers, so be alert to maggots around the vent!

Take the trouble to collect and dry nettle tops, when dried you can store them for a long time and, when needed, pulverize and mix in the food.

Also important: an insecticide powder or spray against lice. This actually belongs more to ordinary care than to 'first-aid', but it is so important that I want to name it here, because the sooner you fight this, the better. This also holds for red mites. Products based on food-grade diatomaceous earth (DE) are my favourite. It works for all parasites and the whitish powder can also be mixed with the sand of the dust-bath, the shavings in the nesting boxes or dusted on the chickens (beard, crest!)

Furthermore it might come handy to keep a flash light (with extra batteries) in your first-aid kit.



We also asked Hristo Lukanov (BG) one of our editors, from Bulgaria:

Hristo studied Veterinary Medicine and was awarded a PhD Degree in Poultry Science. He is specialized in Avian diseases. According to Hristo, amateur poultry breeders could fully enjoy their hobby, when their birds, apart from being valuable and beautiful, are healthy as well. Only a healthy bird can ensure full satisfaction with this wonderful hobby. Along with knowledge in selection, genetics, breeding and feeding, every self-respecting breeder of domestic and exotic birds should know their biology and peculiarities. Furthermore, one has to possess some minimal knowledge regarding healthcare and disease prevention. He kindly wrote an extensive and very interesting article for us titled: "**Disease treatment and prevention in ornamental poultry farming**" which we will proudly publish in our next edition.

To end with

The best way to prevent diseases is to see to it that there is dry litter; good ventilation; hygiene and no overpopulation. Make a habit of observing the birds every day. If some chickens do not come to the feeder eagerly or are listless

with ruffled feathers, these are often the first signs that something is not right. Similarly, watery droppings are a warning. The mentioned means are the designated first-aid treatment: provide a warmer and sheltered place for the sick bird and easily digestible food. Mixing the chicken feed with a little milk powder, corn flour (or some mixed grain ground by hand with an old coffee grinder) often does the trick. It tastes a bit sweet and the lighter colour draws attention, which could attract the bird to eat again. Keeping them eating is always the best remedy. Adding some charcoal and later a vitamin preparation often works miracles.

If there are many chickens (seriously) sick, go see a vet!

All mentioned products are available at animal retail stores or pharmacies, and web shops. Your first-aid supplies for a small flock will fit neatly in a plastic container or storage box or a lidded bucket.

Photo below: Hannamari Röntynen, with our thanks to the Finnish poultry magazine [Munaus](#).



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