

Egg Laying Issues



Age	<p><i>Young hens</i> - It can take some time for the egg laying ‘mechanism’ to all work correctly and soft shelled eggs are common initially. Hens don't lay until they reach a good bodyweight so watch out for subtle bullying as timid hens won't eat around dominant hens.</p> <p><i>Older Hens</i> - If she is a hybrid & is 2 years or older she is possibly coming to the end of her laying life. Hybrids can stop laying anytime after around 2/3 years old, although they will usually lay for much longer.</p>	Feed any smaller hens separately to get her body weight up and trigger laying. Put lots of feeders & drinkers out of sight of each other.
Diet	Ensure her diet is 90% a good quality layers feed. Only give mixed corn as an occasional treat & make sure it is later in the day. Ensure she has access to grit and oyster shell.	Alter the diet and only feed layers feed.
Nutritional Deficiency	She could be deficient in Calcium or vitamin D3 - this shouldn't be a problem if her diet is 90% good quality layers feed. Check your feed is in date and is fresh and dry.	Alter her diet, check the use by dates of feeds.
Egg eating/ egg theft	Egg eating is a common problem. Another very common problem is the eggs being stolen by birds such as magpies. They will take the eggs immediately they are laid leaving no trace and will fly inside the hen house to get them. Your hen could also have made a hidden nest in the garden if she free ranges.	Keep them shut in the house and run for a week. Try using a roll away nestbox or fit a Bumpa bit if the hens are egg eating.
Stress	Anything that stresses or shocks a chicken can cause them to stop laying or lay soft shelled eggs as the egg will pass through her too quickly and be ‘ejected’ before it is completed. Things to consider - thunderstorms, loud unexpected noises, chased by a cat or dog, being picked up or carried around, car horns, low flying planes etc.	Locate the hens in the quietest area of the garden. Be calm & gentle when around them.
Worms	Worms are not always visible and infection can be asymptomatic but worms can also affect egg quality and yield - fewer, smaller, paler, brittle eggs can result. Affected poultry can suffer ill thrift, anaemia and even death	Worm regularly (quarterly) with Flubenvet or do regular worm count tests.
Weather	Very hot weather can cause soft shelled eggs as its thought the hens have a lower food intake during very hot weather so are therefore not taking in enough calcium to produce good eggshells.	Provide as much shelter as possible & ensure fresh water is always available.
Moult	She could be nearing a moult (changing her feathers). Hens will moult annually. Feathers are made up of 80% protein and re-growing feathers as well as making eggs is too much for her so laying will stop. Treat the moult as a time for them to re-feather, rest and restore their levels of vitamins and minerals ready for the new laying season.	Increase protein in the diet with live mealworms/higher protein feed etc. & add a vitamin tonic to the water.
Daylight Hours	Laying is controlled by the amount of daylight. In the winter pure breed chickens will stop laying completely & restart as the daylight hours increase. Hybrids will lay all year round for the first 2 years but after this may slow down or stop laying especially during the short winter days.	You can increase the amount of light using a light on a timer but letting the hens lay naturally is better.