

Re: Chickens on the run!

## Re: Chickens on the run!

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- *From:* a\_l\_p <hay\_hell\_pea@xxxxxxxxxxx>
  - *Date:* Wed, 06 Feb 2008 12:43:47 +1300
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Jill wrote:

"a\_l\_p" <hay\_hell\_pea@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message  
[news:47a8c3b3@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:47a8c3b3@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

Jill wrote:

keith kent wrote:

Hi , I have just finished their new home & in the process of making the enclosure, then i will start to think what to do will the barren soil about 4 m square in front of house/run?

The best option is to cover it with permeable ground cover membrane to prevent the soil coming up and mixing. Then cover this with 4–6 inches of the coarsest bark you can find. You can then use this area to create a "play pen" for them with logs, branches, hanging veggies etc.

Never leave veggies or any quickly decomposable material on the ground for more than a day —its one of the surest ways to attract vermin and can cause botulism in the birds.

\*So far\* – fingers crossed – that hasn't happened here because they scratch it around too much.

I would not say its frequent or common but in our mild wet and warm climate its not as rare

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as I would like.

I am fortunate? enough to have the experience of so many others over the years to draw on. Unfortunately some of them have not been so lucky :( hence my warning.

Any part that looks like it's got trodden-down material I turn

with the garden fork or a stick to loosen. Will have to see how things go in winter of course, could be different. I'd probably do well to buy in a trailer of coarse bark too, it's certainly great for keeping them amused. Easily scratched aside to see what's underneath, and good drainage.

Remember the membrane to keep the soil from mixing with the bark – keeps the nasty bugs away and means the "cultivated" bark is the most superb mulch once composted for a while.

Anyway with your warning I'll be keeping a careful eye on left-overs in the run and adjust feeding practice to deal with what happens as the season progresses.

You seem to have a much lower density of vermin to most locations in the UK. There is such a mix of housing and smallholding that its a lurking problem here without care.

Bare soil and chickens is a BAD idea, except in desert like conditions. Bare soil and chickens in the winter is a very bad idea. Its the recipe for bacterial soup. YUCK

Bare soil packs SO hard! #

Definately different climate and conditions to most of the UK --- <very big grin>  
We get mud in most parts [ not just my seriously soggy part of the countryside]

When my parents first built their covered deep-litter

hen house with a big wire-netting window across the front, I think some of the locals thought it was a poor deal for the chooks. Theirs had houses for roosting and a big netting run "out in the fresh air" where it was bare and hard as concrete, apart from the times it was bare and muddy! Ours always

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had great dust-baths in the straw and dried greens that got gradually scratched to dust.

dust --- dust --- DUST ??? ?!!!! Dust in winter ---- ITS DOES NOT COMPUTE !!  
ahhhhhhhhh

Central Otago. Rainfall around 13-14 inches annually! Frosts, no snow/ Well not entirely NO snow but it was infrequent enough to be hugely exciting. Snow (oops, just spotted typing error - I wonder if the spell checker would have alerted me to "snot"! ) on the mountains of course, and ski-fields not too far away. Anyway the dust was in the INDOOR deep-litter house which was - searching memory and trying to adjust for child's memory in which things were BIG, only to turn out in later years to be strangely shrunk by time - oh, say 2 double beds wide and about half again as long.

At the back was a full-width perch with a board underneath that could be pulled out and scraped. Chooks jumped up onto the board and then onto the perch so the floor underneath was clean dry litter like the rest of it. The front was a full-width window of chicken-netting with a bit of an eave to keep the worst wind and rain out, but where it was sited that wasn't much of a problem. It was too high to see out, otherwise they'd have scratched the litter out. But that was boring for the "girls" so Father added a perch in front too so they could watch what was going on outdoors.

One of the greatest sources of hysterical excitement was when the autumn leaves got raked up and added to the litter. Great squawkings and flappings, followed by high-powered scratching reminiscent of a new find of gold - this was an area whose first influx of Europeans had been the gold prospectors!

So their flooring was always dry, always dust-bathable. The same happened here when I added a roof to my original run because the deep litter became in the wetter coastal conditions deep stinky muck. Now the outdoor run is a place for learning about another set of management tricks.

Vermin - mice, of course. One cat in particular liked to go and hang out in the run pre-the new enclosed outdoor run, in the late autumn to early spring when the chooks were allowed out to range over the whole section apart from the small fenced vege garden. He also liked to go in with the rabbit and guinea pig whose home is L shaped and attached to a corner of the deep litter run. They didn't mind. He caught quite a few mice.

Sparrows are a constant problem. I've gradually blocked up most of the entry places, small gaps where roof meets walls, but they blithely fly in the little door that opens to the outdoor run then get confused about how to get out after they've helped themselves to mash. The cafe scraps go out in the outside run because they tended to be too much all at once for indoors and there was some clagging-up. I pick out the bigger bread pieces and rolls because for one thing the chooks aren't very keen and for another there's an influx of extra sparrows plus nasty quarrelsome starlings. So I put the bread in a chicken-netting bag hung from a tree on the roadside or, in winter, the bird-feeder tree outside my dining room window where I can see them. The roadside site is intended to amuse and encourage passers by to think of the wild birds and what pleasure can be had by feeding them and watching their antics.

I tried putting a cat-friendly climbing post into the outdoor run so they could hang out there and watch for mice and rats but they're too lazy! They hang around outside a lot and the chook-house roof is a popular resting place. Perhaps they are watching for sparrows trying to get under the gaps in the corrugated roofing but I haven't seen much evidence of success.

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A L P

#  
<grin>

Yup -- different conditions to many of us mere mortals !  
;D

Yes, it's very interesting for me, reading about other people's experiences in other parts of the world.

A L P

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