

# Lucky Hens Rescue

## Egg Bound Hen/Egg Peritonitis Help Sheet

An egg bound bird typically shows the following symptoms: lethargy, loss of appetite, draggy wings, closed eyes, puckering vent that is dripping clear or white liquid, swollen vent, tail either straight up in the air or at 'half mast'. A hen who's egg bound will sit on the floor or ground. Her feathers will be fluffed, and she'll be drowsy and act sick. Sometimes you'll actually see her strain as if trying to produce the egg.

More often, you'll notice her tail pumping up and down. I am sure there are many ways in which people help these hens in this situation, I have come across many whilst searching for the best info to provide to help.

- Apply some lubricant to the area to help the egg exit easier and give her a nice warm area to relax for a while. If she is used to being handled and doesn't find it too stressful then submerging her bottom area in warm water and gently massaging the area for about 30 minutes may help relax the muscles. An alternative to that would be a warm flannel held over the area. She needs to be kept warm and comfortable
- Moist heat is considered the safest remedy for egg binding in chickens. Put the hen in a cage with a wire floor. Place a large, flat pan of steaming water beneath the cage. Keep the water warm under her, but don't keep it so hot that the steam burns her

Provide some overhead heat from a heat lamp, and enclose the whole cage with a blanket or plastic to keep the moist heat in. Make sure it doesn't get too hot, however. A thermometer can be used to keep the heat between 90 and 102 degrees Fahrenheit. Water should be available at all times for the hen to drink.

The hen should pass the egg in a couple hours with this treatment. If you see an egg, she should have perked up and will be ready to be removed from the cage. If no egg has passed but she seems more active and will eat, you probably misdiagnosed her. Something else is wrong. If she continues to act droopy and ill, give her a few more hours of treatment. A vet can give a hen an injection of calcium gluconate, which will often cause her to pass the egg.

**A hen that's truly egg bound will die if she doesn't pass the egg, usually within 48 hours so please seek a vet's advice if the above does not appear to help her!**

### Egg Peritonitis

Egg peritonitis is another condition related to egg production that can be fatal to your hen. It is caused by yolk fluid leaking from the oviduct and ovaries into the abdominal cavity. The fluid can build up there, causing a visible swelling of the abdomen. From there, the yolk can get into the blood stream and poison your hen, and it can get laid down in the liver, causing an enlarged liver and liver damage.

Egg peritonitis can make your hen very sick and is difficult to treat. It has much better results if caught early. There are good treatments now around for egg peritonitis and some hens do make a full recovery. Treatment involves using a diuretic like Frusemide to clear away the fluid and drugs like Milk Thistle to help the liver repair itself plus antibiotics to prevent further infection.

Symptoms are very similar to egg binding, with the swelling, the large poops, and panting. The difference is that a hen with egg peritonitis will not put on any extra weight like an egg-laying hen and the swelling will be more internal. An egg can be felt as a solid swelling by the vent, and the swelling from peritonitis isn't so solid to the touch. It is visible by making the hen look bloated in the abdomen and vent area. Your hen may sit on the floor a lot with her tail up vertically for comfort from the swelling. She may spend time on the floor, without all the nesting behaviour she will display if she has an egg and sleep like that, with her tail up vertically. Her behaviour prior to this can be just as frisky with the toys, as if she was cycling an egg. Her droppings may appear with a whitish yellow in the regular dark green colouring and be large, again from the swelling inside.

It is very hard to distinguish between egg binding and egg peritonitis unless you have experience and even then, an x-ray is always done to be sure. Hope this helps you understand why Hens can become egg bound, to help spot signs, if in doubt or if egg binding is suspected, call an avian vet right away for advice and get your hen seen as soon as possible. Time is always of the essence when hens get sick, and the sooner these things are caught, the better the success of treatment for your feathered friend.