

Keeping your flock, your food, and your family healthy

Tips for small-flock poultry owners

Did you know that even healthy birds, their eggs, and meat can all be sources of bacteria that can make you sick? With some basic hygiene and handling practices, you and your family can care for your birds safely.



Children under 5, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems are more at risk. They should avoid contact with live poultry as much as possible.

Use safe bird and food-handling practices

All live poultry, whether from a hatchery, backyard, free-range, or commercial farm, can carry harmful bacteria. These bacteria can spread to you from a bird, its droppings, or anywhere the bird or its droppings have been – including children's toys and equipment.



Health and Hygiene

- Wash your hands with soap and water right after touching your birds or anywhere they've been. Use hand sanitizer until you have access to soap and water.
- Adults should help children wash hands.
- Don't cuddle or kiss your birds. Don't touch your face or eat or drink around live poultry.
- Keep your birds outside of your living space, as well as clothing, footwear and equipment used when caring for birds.
- Purchase chicks from a registered, health-monitored hatchery.



Do you have laying hens?

- Keep laying hens separate from meat-type birds.
- Keep nests clean and collect eggs twice a day.
- Keep clean nest eggs separate from floor eggs and dirty eggs.
- Only wash eggs in clean, hot water (at least 106°F/41°C) using egg wash detergent.
Did you know? It's safer to not wash an egg than to wash it improperly.
- Refrigerate eggs promptly.

Food Safety

- Proper refrigeration, freezing, and thawing are essential to minimize growth of bacteria and keep your food safe!
- Prevent cross-contamination: thoroughly wash hands, cutting boards, counters, and utensils after touching uncooked foods.



Eggs

- Cooking eggs fully, until the yolk is hard, helps ensure they're safe to eat.
- Use pasteurized eggs for recipes that call for raw or soft eggs (e.g. eggnog, mayonnaise).

Meat

- Keep uncooked meats and pet foods separate from produce, cooked foods, and ready-to-eat foods.
- Cook poultry thoroughly. Use a meat thermometer to be sure of a safe temperature (165°F/74°C for ground meat/pieces and 180°F/82°C for solid poultry).
- Bacteria can be reduced by following proper butchering techniques.
- Have you considered using a provincial abattoir to slaughter your poultry? It's required if you want to sell or give away meat.

Know the rules and laws that apply to you – they can be different depending on your municipality and province.

Tips to remember:

Wash hands after handling live poultry

Don't cuddle or kiss your birds, don't eat or drink around live poultry

Prevent cross-contamination from raw meat and eggs

Cook meat and eggs fully

Refrigerate food promptly

Share these tips with your family, friends and customers – show them you care and help keep them safe!

For more information, visit agriculture.alberta.ca/smallflock or call **310-FARM (3276)** (toll-free in Alberta)



Poultry belong outside your home

