

# Tips & Tricks from Hawthorne for your Coop

## **Predator proofing in Southern California**

The predators we must be aware of:

- Mice and Rats
- Raccoons and Opossums
- Coyotes and domestic dogs
- Bobcats and Mountain Lions
- Weasels and Snakes
- Hawks and Owls
- Lice, Mites, Fleas and Parasites
- Humans

## **For your run and any air flow openings:**

We recommend using a product like a Dog kennel, Universal walk in pen that is made of heavy duty wire- this works well for most larger prey animals. Then line that wire with 1/2" or 1/4" hardware cloth. The 1/4 inch can reduce air flow a bit, but it does keep out the smaller rodents, and snakes. The 1/2 " will take care of most rats and weasels. The double wire process helps secure your flock from raccoons, and bobcats that can reach in through the larger heavy wire also. We recommend a solid or wire roof. This also needs to have no opening larger than 1/2X1/2 inch. Many predators climb and some are coming from above to start with.

## **The coop itself:**

In Southern Ca the girls do not NEED an inside area, but we have found that your egg laying consistency and general comfort of the girls is increased with a secure night time roosting/nesting area. We recommend this to have a solid floor with a washable surface like linoleum. Roosts should be at least 2 ft off the ground, the girls really like to be up high. Nesting boxes can also be raised. They like to feel secure to lay. There are many designs, but we suggest you be aware that chickens will sit up on the "roof" of the nesting area if they can, and will poop there.

## **There are many kinds of feeding protocols:**

The types of feeders that have a treadle can help with rodent control. However, we have learned that providing the ideal amount of feed per bird per day at one time and letting the girls clean it up is the best practice both for the girls ( it makes them less picky) and for rodent control. Having a feed pan that is flat and open also lets you clean and disinfect it more frequently. Waterers should also be

cleaned and disinfected very often, so the right size of waterer or moving to an automatic version is very helpful.

**The use of bedding choices, ammonia balancers, antimicrobials, and pest/parasite deterrents:**

We prefer to use the most natural processes and products with our home flock; however there are times that the "heavy" stuff is needed. You will likely need less of the heavy hitting chemical products if you stay ahead with your preventative plan. Preventative plans can include, DE, Lime, Treating all wood surfaces; and using bio hazard control processes. We recommend herbs like Rosemary, Mint, Oregano and Lavender and marigold to deter certain pests. Using fresh, dried and essential oils can all be effective. Essential oils can be very strong and should be researched before jumping in. Probiotics, and electrolytes are helpful in keeping girls' immune systems at full speed to fight off infections, parasites and viruses. Bedding choices in San Diego range from straw, wood shavings, rice hulls, coconut husk, hemp hurd, chopped hay and sand. They each have advantages and disadvantages- that is a whole topic unto itself. It is a good idea to do your research and consider what kind of bedding will work best for you and your family.

Since every situation, and every family will need a customized solution we would love you to email us your concerns and ideas and we will happily work through your coop plans with you .