



Broody chickens

If you've got chickens, you may have experienced one of them going broody at some point. When a chicken becomes broody, they stop laying and will try to incubate eggs whether they are fertilised or not.

Broodiness is a natural feature seen in chickens; however, it is less common in modern hybrids and battery hens compared to traditional breeds. Silkies and Seabrights are particularly prone and can go broody multiple times over a year.

How can it tell if my hen is broody?

Your chicken will be sitting on a nest which may or may not be a usual place for her, with her feathers puffed up. She may become agitated when you go near her and can even peck and become aggressive. Often, she will cluck loudly when aggravated.

Your chicken may be broody for a few weeks which can cause her to lose weight and condition and she can become weak.

What can I do?

Broodiness is a natural behaviour and as such, it is generally best to let it run its course. It is not recommended to try to break the habit, however, during the broody period, you should take your chicken off the nest once daily to eat, drink and go to the toilet.

- Your hen may lose a substantial amount of weight whilst broody, so we recommend feeding her Chicken Vet poultry multivitamins and digesti-health to improve digestion and stimulate appetite.
- Your broody chicken should be checked regularly for red mites as they are attracted to her body temperature and her inactivity, and poor condition makes her vulnerable. Red Mite infestation can be fatal. Please visit your vet if you suspect a red mite infection.
- If your chicken is becoming very weak or unwell, you may need to stop her broody behaviour. This can be attempted by placing her in a bare wire bottomed cage such as a dog crate raised off the floor (eg on bricks) to allow air to circulate under her and cool her underside. You must provide her with food and water in her cage at all times as well as shelter from the elements.

After broodiness, your chicken may moult and look very unkempt and will benefit from supplementation with vitamins.