

Keep Your Chicken Coop Smelling Fresh



Here are five quick tips to help you keep your chicken coop smelling fresh. If your coop makes you hold your breath when you go in to collect eggs, think about how the chickens feel! It's not too hard to keep the coop clean and fresh, if you do a little bit of cleaning every few days. I am listing a few important basics for you.

Keep Your Chicken Coop Smelling Fresh with These 5 Tips

1. **Water and moisture are not your friend.** If you slop or spill water when filling the water founts or bowls, the moisture will mix with the droppings and create a bad ammonia odor. The best way to keep this from piling up is to clean up any spills as they happen. We had to switch to a fount style waterer instead of a bowl because we had one duck in with the chickens and she thought we were giving her a small swimming pool each evening. Mrs. Duck could still get enough water to dip her bill in with the water fount. And there was less mess to cleanup in the morning. Now that the ducks are housed separately, we have returned to using the flexible rubber feed pans for the water bowl in the chicken coop.

Keep the Air Circulating

2. **Install a box fan to keep air circulating.** Stagnant air smells bad and the flies will accumulate more in a stuffy airless building. Running a fan, even on low speed, will keep the flies, and the odor to a minimum. Not to mention that it keeps the coop from becoming too hot, also. We hang an inexpensive box unit over the coop doorway. You can read more about that here, in my heat stress post. Installing a fan is one of the easiest ways to keep your chicken coop smelling fresh.

3. **Use fresh herbs and rose petals** if you have them, in the nesting boxes and in the sleeping areas. Not only will the herbs and petals smell great, the hens will appreciate the yummy treat. Mint is another great addition and it will help repel pests too. Check out more about using herbs in your nesting boxes. Another good source for chicken information is *The Homesteader's Natural Chicken Keeping Handbook*, by Amy Fewell.

4. Every few days or once a week, clean out any bedding that is soiled or damp. We use hay or straw in the nesting boxes. Straw is preferred because it is low in moisture, which is optimal for keeping odor at a minimum. Occasionally we have to use hay because we are out of straw. I try to use the driest hay bale I can find that is not dusty or moldy. The chickens will track in some wet mud, or occasionally an egg breaks, in the nests. The bedding is thrown out in the chicken yard for them to peck through before it is added to the compost pile. Sprinkle some Diatomaceous Earth powder or First Saturday Lime product, under the fresh hay or straw to absorb moisture and odors.

Why You Should Use Lime in the Coop

Last year I started using an agricultural product, First Saturday Lime. I am not an affiliate with the company, but I am a happy customer. I believe in sharing my thoughts on good products when I find something worthwhile. First Saturday Lime is basically lime, but the formula is 100 % non toxic, non caustic and safe for pets and children, along with livestock and poultry. As with any dust type product, care should be taken when applying the product to avoid inhaling the dust. I make sure the fan in the coop and barn is off and that it's not a windy day. Once it is applied, the product does not seem to blow around at all.

You can read more about the product on their website. After a year of using the product, I can honestly say that it does a better job of preventing odors, controlling insects and providing an additional calcium source than any previous product used here. We still offer oyster shell, or crushed egg shells but it's good to know that the FSL provides an additional source of calcium for our layer hens.



In addition, we use it in the sheep and goat barn, rabbit house, and the litter pans for our house rabbits get a liberal dose of FSL at each cleaning. If you raise house rabbits, you know odor can be a problem. Since starting to use First Saturday Lime in the rabbit litter, I clean the boxes less frequently.

Time For a Major Cleanup

5. **Several times a year, completely clean out the bedding on the coop floor.** Sometimes we use the deep litter method of coop bedding. This means that we continue to add fresh bedding or shavings as needed to the coop and only remove the damp/wet or soiled bedding on the floor as needed. In the winter this adds to the warmth of the coop by keeping the decomposing litter and feces in the building. Decomposing matter creates heat. We keep less litter and shavings in the coop during the hot months of summer to keep it cooler. The frequency of cleaning out the coop will depend on the weather, humidity, how much time the chickens are kept in the coop, among other

factors.

Keeping chickens happy and smelling good is not a full time job and doesn't need to be. Maintain a dry environment and you will be able to keep your chicken coop smelling fresh.



**Updated 4/28/2017 from the original post written 6/25/2013

Updated 5/20/2019

