

Treating Bumblefoot in Chickens



Bumblefoot, in poultry, is something that occurs more frequently in moist warm conditions. Just the kind of weather we experience on the East coast most of the summer.

Think about it this way. Your hands are never fully dried and your skin gets soft and somewhat fragile. The skin on your hands is soft and you are working around rough items in the yard. The next thing you know, you get a splinter! But you can't pick it out of your hand... because you are a chicken! You don't have tweezers or thumbs so the splinter just sort of festers and works its way into your soft skin.

Dirt and germs go along with the splinter and the next thing you know the germs have taken over. An infection has brewed

inside your skin but the spot where the splinter went in, has healed over. Now what?

Bumblefoot- How it happens...



That, of course was an analogy of how **bumblefoot** can occur. The chicken is walking around in muddy wet conditions. The skin on the bottom of the foot is softened. The chicken jumps off the roost, or scratches in the dirt and ouch! Something sharp penetrates the skin on the bottom of the foot.

Dropping Board -Keeping a Clean Coop

Another way a chicken's foot is susceptible to a bumble foot in chickens infection is the type of roost. If the roost is rough or extremely narrow such as the top of a metal fence, the way the chicken has to grip the roost can lead to bumble

foot. Roosts should maintain the foot in a relaxed gripping position, where the resting chicken's body covers the entire foot.

Now that we know some of the factors behind a chicken getting a bumblefoot infection, what do you do?

When I took care of the first bumblefoot infection in our flock, I read as much as I could. Most of the information available at the time, recommended a type of surgical procedure using a scalpel to cut into the foot and remove the core of infection. Many in the chicken community still recommend this approach and avian veterinarians if you can find one, will use this approach.



A foot soak in Betadine solution and vettrycin spray to clean the feet and disinfect

Other chicken websites and chicken caretakers began to treat the infection with out using invasive techniques involving surgery and were having good results. As we often do, I took what I thought were the best parts of each method and have a method that works and that I am comfortable using. Fortunately, bumblefoot infections in my flock are not all that frequent. But I have had success using either method. The non-surgical approach is much easier for most people to stomach though, so I will describe that here.

What to Look For

The first clue that something is wrong may come from observing

your chicken's behavior. Often the chicken will be hesitant to walk on the affected leg and foot. It may hold the foot up off the ground or stay hunkered down on the ground. Upon lifting the chicken up and looking at the bottom of the foot, this may be what you see. An obvious sore or abscess that has formed on the bottom of the foot.



Bumblefoot is a Staph Infection.

When working with a bumble foot infection it is a good idea to wear disposable exam gloves.

First you should gather up your supplies for treating the infection.



I cut the strips of vet wrap and hang them near by so I can grab the next strip quickly.

Here's what I use:

- Saline solution to rinse and clean
- Veterycin wound and infection spray
- Triple antibiotic ointment (make sure it is the kind with NO pain reliever added)
- Gauze pads, 2 inch by 2 inch
- Cohesive bandage cut in long strips
- Electric Tape
- Scalpel in case you need it.
- Tweezers

Find a Quiet Place to Work on the Chicken

Next, you will gather up the chicken and take her somewhere calm to work on her. I usually include snacks of meal worms or some other tasty morsel to sweeten the deal.

A quick tip- When working on a chicken, tipping them upside down and tucking the head and wings under your arm can give you a good angle for working on the feet and seems to calm the bird down.

Look at both feet. Hopefully there is only one foot infected with bumblefoot, but sometimes both feet will be affected.

Cleanliness!

I like to clean up the foot and start with a clean area. I stood my hen in a mixture of Betadine and Veterycin wound spray. After the foot bath, I dried her feet and tucked her under my arm to control the wings while I worked on the foot. In this case the infection had abscessed already so I was also dealing with an open wound. I cleaned it out as best I could, not really using the scalpel to cut into the foot but just to

clean away the debris and any scab. Tweezers might also be helpful at this point.



Next I soaked a gauze pad with Vettrycin spray and held it on the bumblefoot wound. I wanted the solution to soak in. I prepared another gauze pad to get it ready for bandaging.

While holding the clean gauze pad with Vettrycin and triple antibiotic ointment on the wound, grab one strip of vet wrap. Hold the end of the vet wrap strip around the shank on the lower leg. Bring the vet wrap down and between two toes and back over the top of the foot. Continue wrapping in a figure 8 style through the toes and around the foot ending back up on the shank. I often use two or three strips of vet wrap on each foot.

How to Treat Bumblefoot Infection

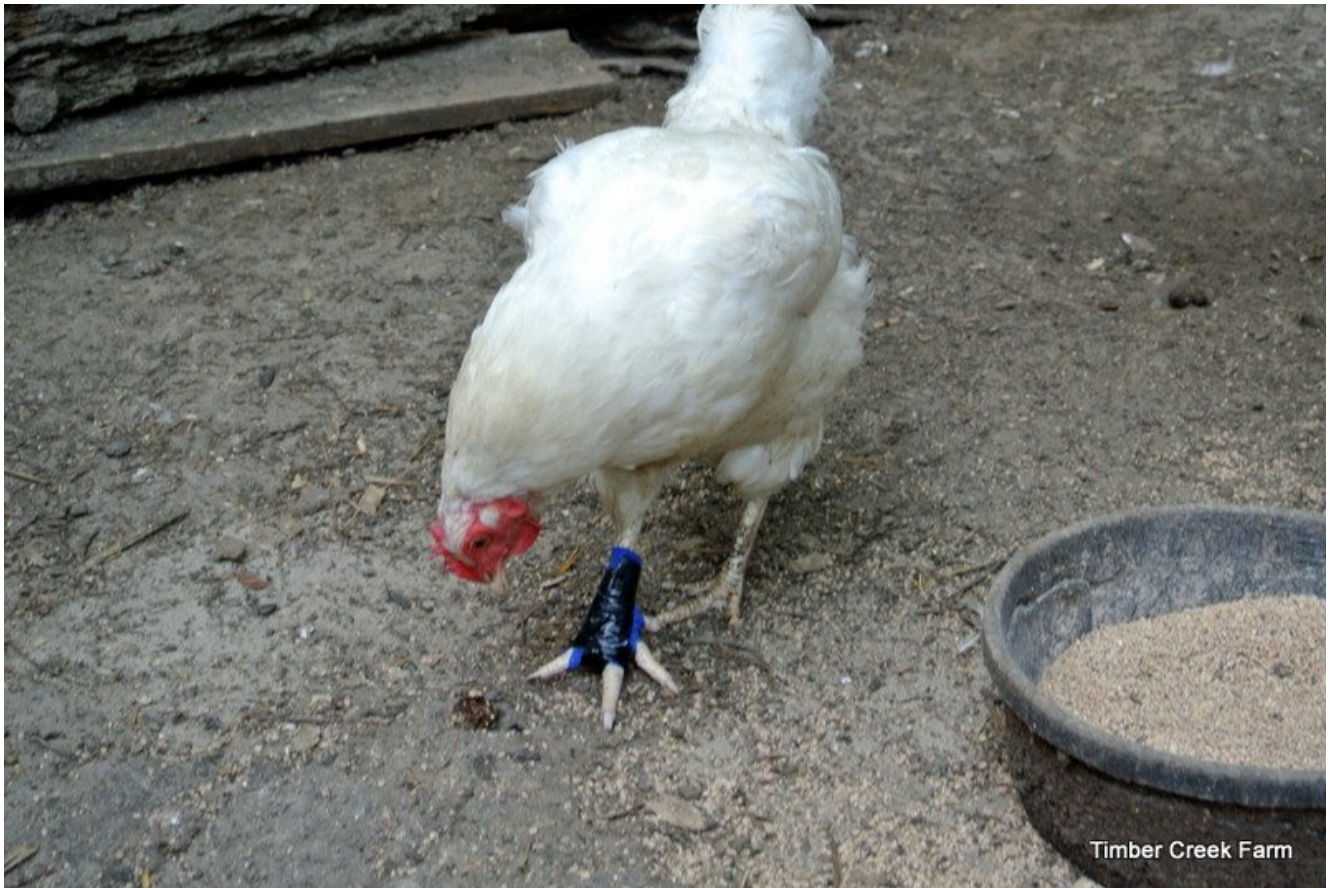


When the wrapping is completed, grab the strip of electrical tape and again, starting on the shank do a wrap that will hold the vet wrap bandage in place, ending up on top or on the shank. The electrical tape will hold the bandage job in place and resist moisture that might allow the bandage to unwrap and fall off.



Observe the Chicken for a Few Minutes

Slowly allow the chicken to return upright and set her on the ground. She will inspect the bandage job but should be able to walk normally and scratch at the ground. The bandage will keep most of the dirt from reaching the bumblefoot wound site.



The bandage should be changed every day and a cleaning done on the bumblefoot wound. Reapply a fresh bandage. After a week you should notice a difference in the appearance of the bumble. It should start to look less inflamed, less swollen and sore and look like it is healing. Usually, in the cases I have treated, the wound is well on the way to being completely gone within a month's time. Good routine care is the key, along with observing that the problem is starting to go away and not get worse. If you start to see signs of infection returning, feel heat in the foot and leg and notice the chicken not acting well, you should seek veterinary assistance.



healing up nicely. notice that the inflammation is gone and the wound is nearly gone

Disclaimer Statement

I am not a vet and any suggestions, or procedures are given just as a farming method of dealing with an infection. Therefor, No guaranteed results are given or implied If you don't feel comfortable treating your own chickens, then you should seek out a mentor or a veterinarian. But, my advice would be to try to learn from the mentor so you can be more confident when an illness or injury occurs in your flock.



Other than an early molt happening, Ms. Featherfoot is healing up nicely!

