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Winter Housing for Poultry Tips for Overwintering Your Birds

Presented by:

**Alex Needham
(Radical Root Farm)**

**Nick Batchelder
(Midnight Sun Farm)**

Hosted by:

**Food Animal Concerns Trust
(FACT)**



Photo courtesy of Midnight Sun Farm

Introductions

Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) is a national nonprofit organization that advocates for the safe and humane production of meat, milk, and eggs.

FACT's **Fund-a-Farmer Project** awards grants and facilitates peer-to-peer farmer education to increase the number of animals that are raised humanely in this country.



Our Presenters

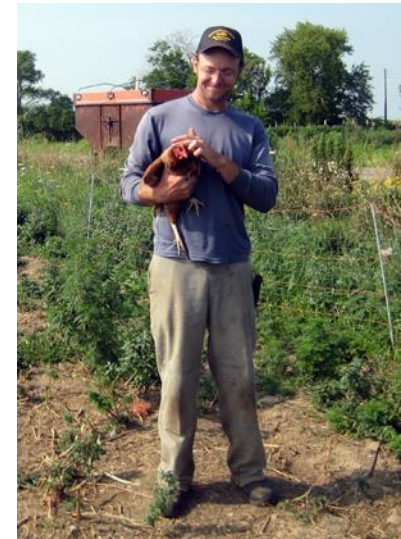


Alex Needham – Radical Root Farm

- Libertyville, IL
- 2014 Fund-a-Farmer grant recipient

Nick Batchelder – Midnight Sun Farm

- Harvard, IL
- 2013 Fund-a-Farmer grant recipient



Radical Root Farm

Overwintering Chickens



Who we are

A 13 acre certified organic family farm in Libertyville, IL

CSA, Market and Farm stand

We raise diversified vegetables, 600 pastured chickens for eggs, honey



Overwintering Chickens

- Feed
- Water
- Shelter
- Electric



Feed

- 16 % layer ration
 - Can raise protein levels in winter.
- Additional items
 - Oyster shells
 - Grit



RF300-P FEEDER (NEW DESIGN)

Water

- 275 gallon tote
 - 1 Gal. Vinegar
 - Every Month
- Bucket heater



Water (Cont.)

- Bell waters
- Heat tape



Water (Cont.)



Other Options (Smaller Flocks, etc.)



Shelter

- Hoop house
 - Space
 - Outdoor access
- Nest boxes
- Straw



Fencing

- More than one set
- Solar Electric



Electric

- Supplemental lighting
- Electric needs



Brooding in the winter



Different from Layers

- Supplemental heat
- Different Feed
- Different Bedding



Finished product



Egg Washing in Winter



Thank you!



Keeping Chickens in Winter: An Overview



Nick Batchelder
Midnight Sun Farm
Harvard, IL

Winter Egg Production

- What changes in production should I expect?
- Using supplemental lighting
- Storing your eggs
- Molting
 - When will it happen?
 - What will it look like?
 - How will it affect productivity?



Scheduling Your Flock

- Heritage vs. hybrid breeds
 - Hybrid layers for predictable laying and profitability
 - Heritage breeds if slow winter production is desired
- Think about your market and where the eggs are going to go
 - Farmers markets? Wholesale? CSA? Other?



Starting chicks in the fall

- When to start chicks for peak production
- Housing/brooder boxes
- Supplemental heat and protection
- Ensure good ventilation, draft-free, dry



Chick housing in cold weather

- 250 watt red bulbs
- Plywood
- 4x4
- Raise to shoulder height of birds
- Good pine shavings for bedding, not cedar

Brooder box outside:



Brooder box inside:



Winter Feeding

- Increased carbohydrate levels (%15 protein)
- Maintain all other nutritional levels for laying productivity
- Withholding feed and water combined with low light levels can trigger a molt cycle

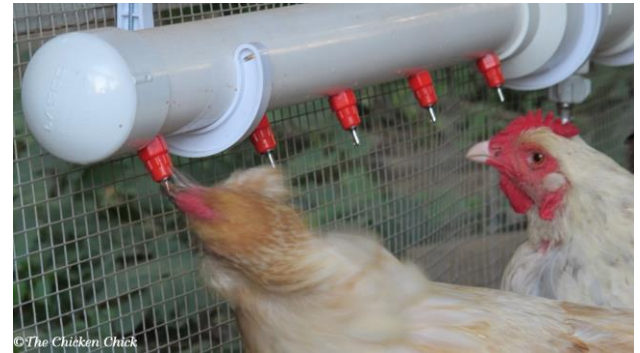


Winter watering

(aka It's always fun to go to the clerk at the Fleet Farm and ask where the chicken nipples are) :



- Parts list: 2 inch pvc, epoxy, nipples
- Watch for puddling and wet areas around the waterer



Winter watering

Other solutions

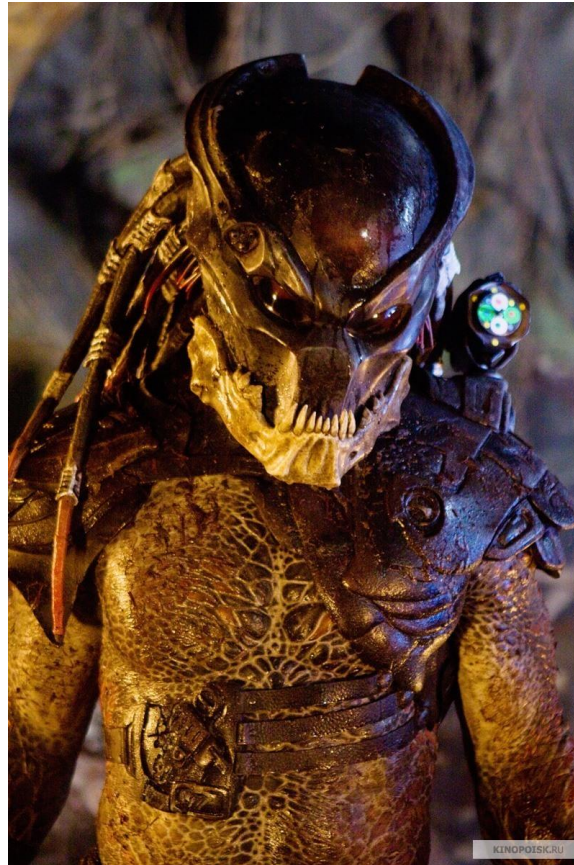
- Pans
- Fountains
- More frequent refills
- Fewer problems with freezing



RidingWarehouse.com



Predators!



Weasels!

- Signatures:
 - Stockpiling
 - Neck biting/ breaking
 - Tunneling
 - Can fit in any hole that will allow the average thumb!
- Mitigation:
 - Hardware cloth/ Exclusion



Skunks!

- Signatures:
 - Beheading/ messy kill
 - Strong smell, look for tracks/ sloppy burrowing
- Mitigation:
 - Exclusion, hardware cloth, live traps, dogs



Coyotes!

- Signatures:
 - Tracks
 - Howling/ yipping
 - Feather piles
 - Missing birds
- Mitigation:
 - Exclusion
 - Hardware cloth
 - Electric fence
 - Live traps/ snap traps
 - Dogs



Possums!

- Signatures:
 - Messy kills
 - Good climbers
 - Tracks
- Mitigation:
 - Exclusion
 - Live traps
 - Dogs



Hawks! Owls!

- Signatures:
 - Beheading
 - Evisceration/ spread-eagle carcass
 - Feather piles
- Mitigation:
 - Exclusion



- Chicken wire keeps chickens in
- Hardware cloth keeps predators out



Thank you!



Please type your questions!



Photo taken at Radical Root Farm