

# Transport of Hens for Backyard Flocks

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Any transportation of end-of-lay hens should be carried out with particular care in a manner that minimizes stress and reduces the chance of injury. Birds that appear sick or injured prior to catching must **not** be transported, and must be humanely euthanized immediately.

Birds being transported are subject to a number of stresses including:

- Catching and handling
- Deprivation of food, water, and normal movement
- Changes in climatic conditions (high or low temperatures, humidity and precipitation)
- Suffocation due to crowding or piling of birds
- Unfamiliar surroundings, noises and sensations.

## *Low-stress Handling*

- Catching and loading of birds should happen under subdued lighting while birds are at rest. Ideally, catching should be done in full darkness using a head lantern.
- Ensure low-stress catching of free-run/range hens by:
  1. Reducing the light intensity in the barn or using blue bulbs, which provide illumination for humans but not for birds
  2. Corralling birds into small groups using dividers or screens in order to prevent crowding and piling of large numbers of birds
  3. Placing birds in the transport crates inside the barn as close to the point of catching as possible
- If possible, birds should be held upright with two hands. If birds must be picked up by the legs, they must be held by both legs. **Spent hens have very brittle bones, and should be handled with extreme care.**
- When loaded into crates/boxes, birds must be positioned on their feet, and crates must always be carried in a horizontal position.



## *Crate/Box Characteristics*

To avoid unnecessary injuries and discomfort in transit, the crates/boxes must:

- Be clean and sturdy
- Be of a design that prevents escape from, or the protrusion of any part of a bird
- Have a floor design that prevents birds' toes from being injured when stacked
- Be of sufficient height to allow birds to stand
- Allow for adequate ventilation
- Not have sharp edges that could cause injuries
- Provide at least 340cm<sup>2</sup>/bird (and preferably more)



## *Feed and Water*

- Birds must receive feed during the 24 hours prior to transport and must not be deprived of water prior to loading.
- Birds should not be held in containers for longer than 12 hours unless they have access to feed and water.
- Once the birds arrive at their final destination, they should be provided with feed, water, and a place to get used to their new surroundings. **Water is particularly critical upon arrival;** the transporter should assist the birds in locating the new water source(s) by pouring water into the reservoir.

## *Climatic Conditions*

- During transit, birds must be protected from the wind, rain, and extreme temperatures.

## *Euthanasia*

If necessary, **euthanasia must be carried out by a trained and proficient individual** who can perform the procedure quickly and effectively to minimize experience of pain or stress to the animal.

Appropriate methods of euthanasia are:

- Cervical (neck) dislocation
- Hand held electrical stunning, immediately followed by severing of the carotid artery
- Gas stunning, preferably using Argon/CO<sup>2</sup> mix.
- Overdose with a barbiturate such as pentobarbital, **only** if administered by a veterinarian