



Chickens in the Playground

Keeley Thomas

Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School,
Coventry

- Why keep poultry in a school setting?
- Legislation and good sense
- Good husbandry
- Incubation and beyond
- Creating your school chicken policy



Why keep poultry in a school setting?

- BTEC Level 2 Animal Care: chickens are one of the named species for the externally assessed unit.
- BTEC Level 3 Animal Management: chickens are named on several units.
- Science: life cycles, genetics, adaptations, etc.
- Every other subject in existence!
- Plus it's a lovely and effective pastoral/ extra-curricular activity.

Legislation and good sense

- Chickens are classed as livestock, not pets.
- You do not need to register for a CPH number, this is only for cattle, sheep, goats and pigs.
- You can sell your eggs and use them in cooking lessons.
- You don't need a cockerel.



The GB Poultry Register

- “You must register poultry flocks of 50 or more birds that you own or are responsible for. They don’t have to all be the same species. This applies even if your premises are only stocked for part of the year.
- You should register your poultry within one month of their arrival at your premises.
- If you have fewer than 50 birds you do not need to register. You are, however, encouraged to register voluntarily so that Defra can contact you quickly if there is an outbreak of disease.”
- www.gov.uk/guidance/poultry-registration

Salmonella testing: Meat

You don't have to have your flock tested if you:

- farm fewer than 2,000 chickens
- only produce meat for private use rather than for sale
- only sell meat direct to consumers through farm gate sales or to local retailers that only supply consumers

Salmonella testing: Eggs

Requirements of the Salmonella National Control Programme (NCP) for laying hens apply to all operators producing eggs on a commercial basis, except where:

- all production is for private domestic use
- the holding has fewer than 350 hens and supplies direct to the consumer or via local retailers

Egg Sales (fewer than 50 birds)

'At the Gate' Sales:

- you do not need to mark eggs with a producer code
- You do not need to label your boxes with anything in particular (but it is best practice to do so).

Public Market Sales:

- you still do not have to mark your eggs with a producer code.
- However, you must display your name, address, the best before date and advice on how to keep eggs chilled after purchase.

Registration of laying hen establishments.



All laying hen establishments with 350 or more laying hens to be registered with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). This includes caged, barn, free range or organic egg-producing hens.

You must also register with APHA as a producer if:

- you have 50 or more hens and any of your eggs are marketed at a local public market
- any of your eggs are marketed to registered packing centres

If you sell eggs to shops or catering outlets, you must be approved and authorised as a packing centre by APHA so you can grade them as Class A eggs. Registration is free.

Washing Eggs

Washing of eggs is permitted under food law.

Washing of eggs is not recommended!

“The priority in egg production is to produce clean eggs at the point of collection, rather than trying to clean them afterwards. The cleanliness of the egg should be assured by good management and hygiene of the poultry house, and by minimising the delay between egg laying and egg collection.” (www.fsai.ie)

Why not?

- “There is an increased risk of Salmonella transmission from the outside to the inside of eggs during washing.
- These risks can be multiplied several-fold by poor washing practice.
- For example, if soiled eggs are left uncollected for a few hours after laying, and/or if they are left to soak in wash water, then there is more time for the Salmonella to pass through the shell into the egg.
- Additionally, if the washing water is not at least 11oC above the temperature of the egg, then Salmonella can be sucked into the egg through the pores in the shell.
- Even after washing, if eggs are not dried quickly and completely before storage then there is more chance of Salmonella penetrating the shell.
- The use of chemical detergents or sanitisers in the wash water may not help, because some chemicals may actually increase the porosity of the shell making it easier for Salmonella to cross the shell barrier.
- Getting egg washing right to avoid all these increased risks is not simple, and for that reason it is much safer not to wash them at all, but to concentrate on good husbandry, and the production of eggs that are clean in the first place. “

Disposal of Waste

- Poultry litter, to be spread on land as a fertiliser, is not classified as waste.
- Dirty bedding and litter can be composted beforehand, as long as any runoff is not allowed to contaminate waterways (the same as any high nitrate runoff).
- Running poultry on land where fruit and veg are to be grown is fine, if managed wisely.

Disposal of Fallen Stock

Chickens are not pets...

“You are allowed to bury pet animals.

A pet animal is defined in the regulations as “any animal belonging to a species normally nourished and kept, but not consumed, by humans for purposes other than farming”.

This does not apply to farm animals such as sheep, cows, pigs, goats and **poultry**.

Farm animals must be disposed of using an approved disposal method for fallen stock. (www.gov.uk)

Noise Pollution

- As more people keep poultry, there are inevitably more complaints about crowing from the neighbours.
- It only takes one complaint to trigger an investigation by Environmental Health Department.
- Common sense measures and diplomacy can usually save the day. There's some great advice on the Poultry Club's website.
- Most complaints are not upheld.

Dispatching

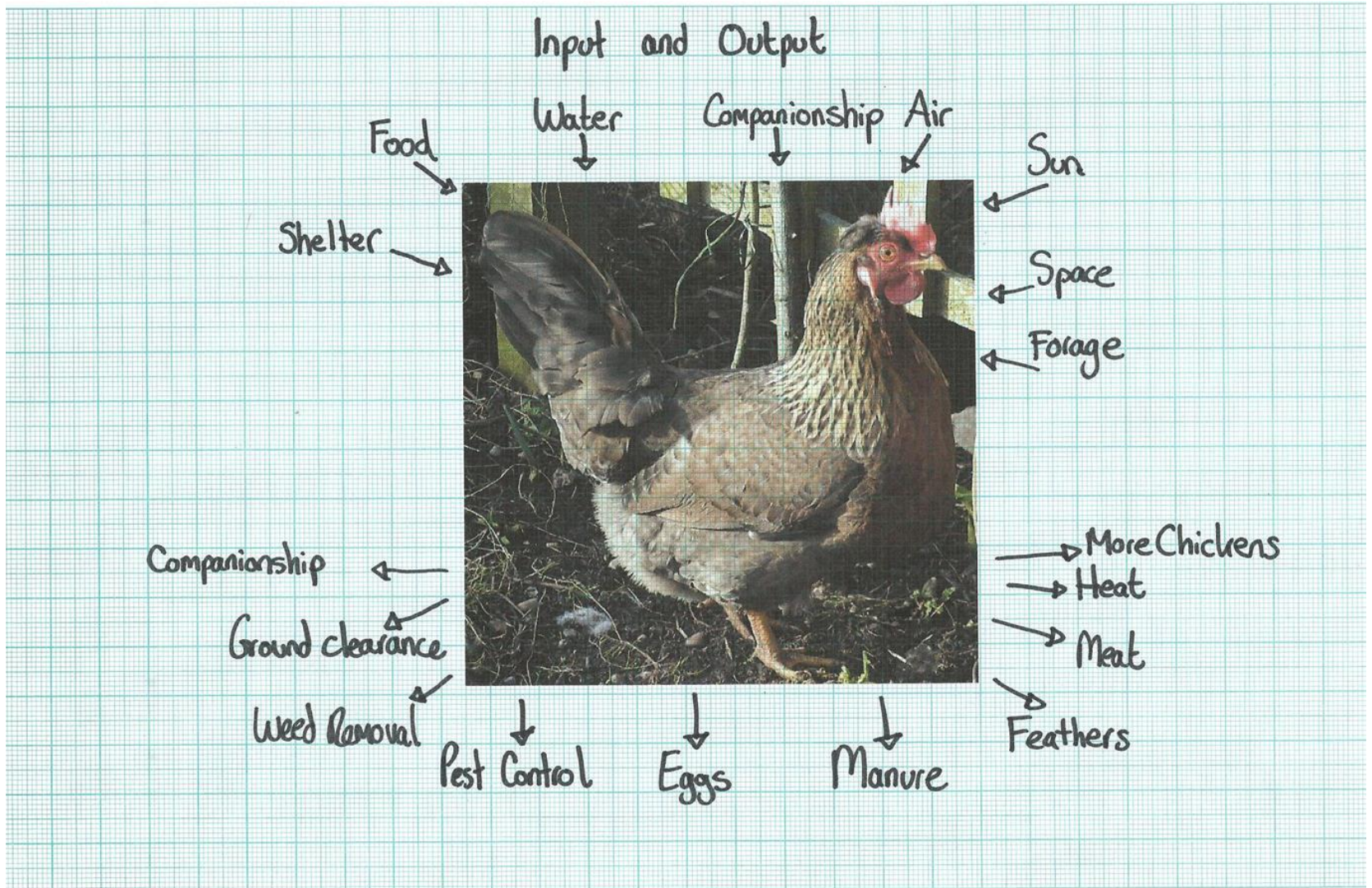
“Small numbers of birds on home premises can be killed by neck dislocation without prior stunning which may take two people with a large goose or turkey.

It is the responsibility of the keeper to ensure that poultry are killed humanely.” (Poultry Club of Great Britain)

Good Husbandry

- Chicken keeping in schools is increasingly popular.
- We are responsible for inspiring the next generation of poultry enthusiasts.
- Instead of the usual coop and run...

Permapoultry



Chicken Tractors

- Make great compost
- Devour pests
- Destroy weeds
- Reduce parasite burdens
- provide enrichment
- Provide free forage
- Eggs with golden yolks that are better for you



Chicken Tractor on Steroids (Geoff Lawton)



Chicken Food Forests

- Orchard management
- Free, seasonal food
- Mimics their wild ancestry; the Asian Jungle Fowl's way of life.



Tiny Food Forests

- Growing forage plants in pots
- Sending the chickens into the veg patch between crops.





Unconventional Housing

Fodder Systems

- Sprouted grain has a higher nutritional content
- Produces deeper yellow yolks
- Feed less
- Less waste
- Lower costs



Demonstrates plant growth quickly and clearly.

Incubation and Beyond



Responsible Incubation

- It's a very popular project in schools.
- Not always responsibly or ethically run.
- Lots of horror stories about school hatches amongst the poultry communities.
- Limited education, could be so much more.
- We need more successful hatching projects in schools!

How can we achieve this?

- I am working with Eggucation to promote more ethical hatching projects.
- We need more resources to develop a more honest, prepared and higher welfare approach.
- What would you find useful, or what could you contribute?



[Join the Rare Poultry Society Here](#)

Conservation is at the heart of everything we do at Eggucation.

We pride ourselves on being **the ETHICAL** schools hatching service. This is because;

- 🐣 **ALL** the eggs that go into our partner schools are from our own, often critically Rare Breeds, **ALL** on the RBST watchlist.
- 🐣 We are fully **licensed** by RBST, which means that our birds are **ALL** from their watch list and that the work **YOU** do is directly supporting them.
- 🐣 We are member of & have signed the **RBST pledge** which ensures the welfare and quality of our birds, and that we are preserving them from extinction.

🐣 These are eggs that we would be hatching ourselves and the chicks are a vital part of our breeding programmes and conservation work. **ALL** chicks are collected from our schools at the end of the experience (if your school wishes to keep any chicks this has to be pre-arranged to ensure you have suitable breeds).

🐣 **ALL** chicks are grown on in warm sheds and then free ranging on grass.

Explore:

- How are schools prepared for a hatch?
- What support are they given?
- Why do schools hatch?
- What happens to the chicks, in particular the males?
- How can school incubation projects contribute to key issues in farming in a positive way?

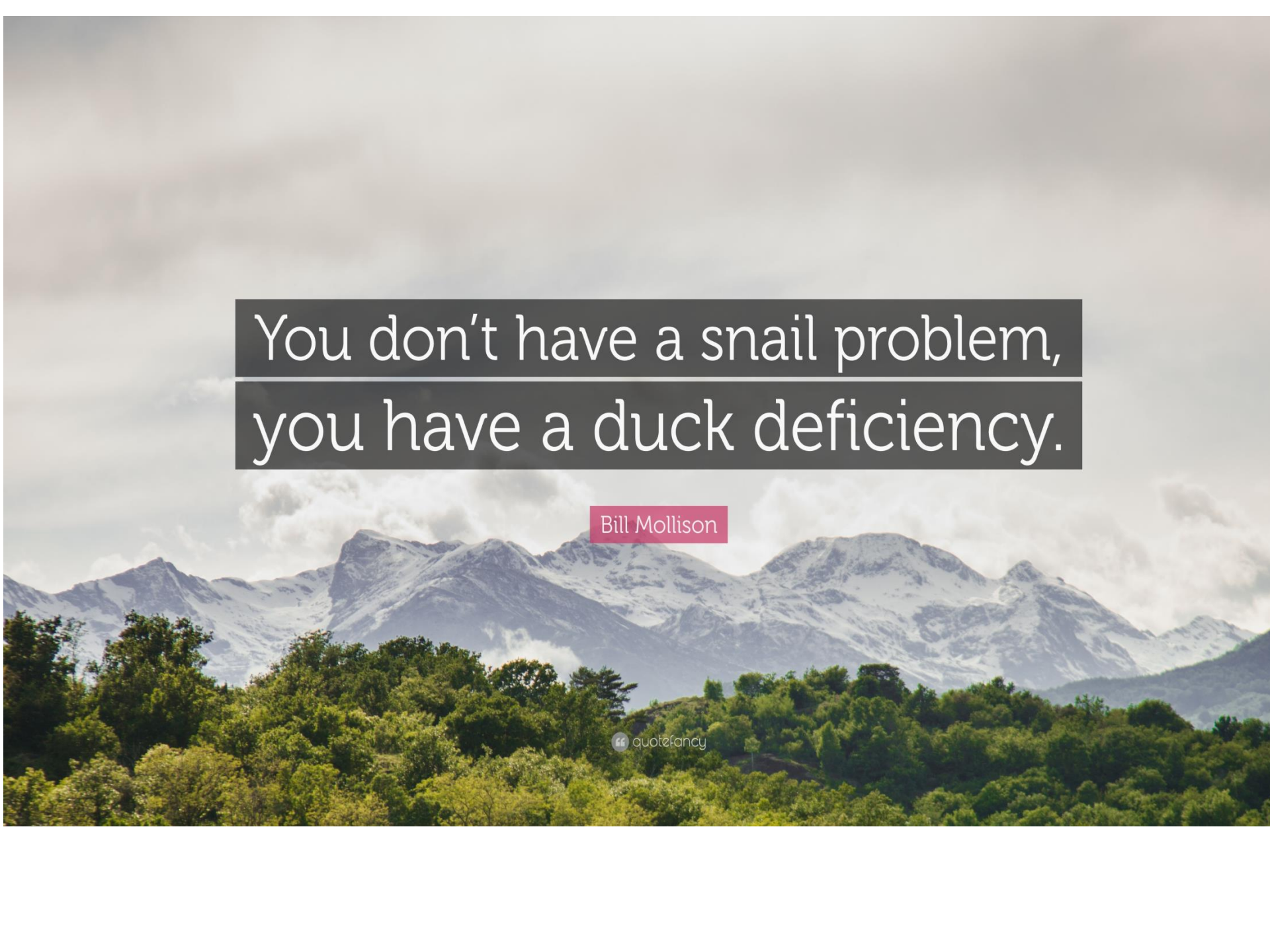
Creating a School Chicken Policy

- Planning and training can help avoid failures.
- Schools will be more prepared for staff changes, holidays and any health issues of their birds.



The Future

- More ethical hatching projects.
- More successful poultry keeping in more schools.
- GYHD resources continually developed, including case studies.
- PCGB are looking into developing a GCSE level poultry husbandry certificate.



You don't have a snail problem,
you have a duck deficiency.

Bill Mollison

“ quote fancy