

## SUMMER HEAT AND COCHIN CARE

by Matt McCammon, originally published in the July, 2011 Poultry Press

Some practical advice on keeping Cochins healthy in hot weather. Cochins are not a hot weather bird as one could notice by looking at them. I find that Cochins can deal with hot conditions better if the following suggestions are followed.

First, females seem to be stressed by heat worse than males. I make sure my females can get on the ground. I have very sandy soil, and the females will dig down in the sand and lay there to get cooled off. Most of the time they won't leave the barn, but if they do there are several places they can go for shade and protection in the chicken yard.

Clean cold water is a must and often will need to be refreshed several times per day if possible. Although Cochins aren't very reproductively aggressive, it is best not to have a male running after the females all the time. It makes for stress that is compounded in the heat.

I do back off of the feed a little. My feed is heavily corn, so I back off that a little and supplement with greens and garden produce. They love tomatoes, and I plant them just for the chickens. My wife and I can't eat nearly what the chickens eat in a week! Cucumbers and other succulent treats also add lighter foods to the diet that will aid in the cooling process.

Keep a good breeze blowing through your buildings. Use fans if necessary. This will help deter insects, especially flies. Cochins may build up quite a collection of manure on the feathers near the vent. That is a disaster waiting to happen. Flies are drawn there and maggots may even develop. I have had this happen in the period of just a day. If you keep an eye out for it, you can usually wash them away and everything is fine. Watch for females that droop their tail and stand awkwardly. They may be infested.

Males are housed individually in pens. That way they aren't using up energy showing off or picking fights. They don't have access to the sand, but they seem to do alright. They still get the same treats I give the females and have access to cool water and a nice breeze if one is blowing.

Don't overcrowd developing chicks. Keep a light bulb on at night. Not a bigger bulb for heat, but one that will keep them from piling up. Low voltage rope lights work great. Cochins are bad about piling. If they pile in the dark on a warm night, several promising youngsters will be suffocated quickly. It's always the promising ones too, right? I burn a small bulb in my growing buildings throughout the summer. Better to be safe than sorry.