

# What Gardeners Can Do: Tips for Urban Chicken Keepers

*There are many benefits to gardening and to raising chickens. However, some urban soils may contain chemicals – including lead – from years of human activity, and some of those chemicals can get into chicken eggs if chickens are exposed to them. The following suggestions may help reduce chickens' exposure to lead and other contaminants in soil.*

**Use clean soil** when constructing new chicken runs. Consider having the soil tested by a NYS-certified laboratory.

**Add clean cover** material to existing chicken runs. A layer of clean soil, mulch or straw may help keep chickens from being exposed to underlying soil.

**Use a feeder instead of scattering feed** on bare ground to help reduce the amount of soil chickens ingest.

**Look for possible sources** of lead, such as structures painted with lead-based paint, and keep chickens away from them.

**Limit foraging activity** to areas where soil is not suspected to have higher concentrations of lead or other chemicals.



**Remove small loose objects** that chickens might ingest from chicken runs and foraging areas. Some items can harm chickens if they are eaten, and some may also be a source of lead or other chemicals.

**Don't feed chickens unwashed plant material** from areas of your garden where soil has higher concentrations of lead or other chemicals.

**Provide a calcium supplement.** An adequate calcium supply is important for laying hens, and it may help reduce the amount of lead that gets into their eggs.



Cornell University  
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences  
Department of Crop and Soil Sciences



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
New York City



See reverse for more about the **Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities** project, or visit us at <http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/healthypoils.htm>

**Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities** is a research and education partnership with urban gardeners. For more information on healthy gardening, check out our resources online or contact one of our project partners!

Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities Project: <http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/healthysoils.htm>

NYS Department of Health *Healthy Gardening* Page: <http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1301/>

More Resources for Healthy Soils: <http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/soilquality.htm>

*Fact Sheets:*

- ✓ Sources and Impacts of Contaminants in Soils <http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/sourcesandimpacts.pdf>
- ✓ Guide to Soil Testing and Interpreting Results <http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/guidetosoil.pdf>
- ✓ Best Practices for Healthy Gardens [http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/Soil\\_Contaminants.pdf](http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/Soil_Contaminants.pdf)

**Project Contacts:**

*Cornell Waste Management  
Institute at Cornell University*

Contact: Hannah Shayler

Phone: (607) 254-2377

Email: [has34@cornell.edu](mailto:has34@cornell.edu)

*Cornell University Cooperative  
Extension-NYC*

Contact: Gretchen Ferenz

Phone: (212) 340-2926

Email: [gsf4@cornell.edu](mailto:gsf4@cornell.edu)

*New York State Department of Health  
Center for Environmental Health*

Contact: Becky Mitchell

Phone: (518) 402-7820

Email: [hms01@health.state.ny.us](mailto:hms01@health.state.ny.us)

*Si requiere más información o tiene preguntas en Español, llame al teléfono 1-800-458-1158 y oprima 1, o comuníquese por email al [lgm01@health.state.ny.us](mailto:lgm01@health.state.ny.us) (Lydia Marquez-Bravo, New York State Department of Health, Departamento de Salud del Estado de Nueva York).*

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