

Animal Behavior and Restraint:

Poultry

During animal health emergencies involving poultry, tasks requiring the handling and restraint of the birds are likely. Having a basic understanding of poultry behavior and humane restraint methods will help minimize the stress on the birds and reduce the risk of injury to responders.

Poultry Characteristics

- Poultry are prey animals and stress easily. Stressors for poultry include rapid movements, bright lights, and loud sounds.
- The flock will have a distinct pecking order, which establishes which birds are dominant and which are submissive. Dominant birds can be very aggressive to submissive birds, and this behavior may even evolve into cannibalism.
- Poultry are very social creatures and like to stay together in flocks. The flock will have a defined "flight zone", which determines how close a person can approach before the flock moves away. Some birds, such as turkeys, will move towards a person when they enter the pen.

Signs of Stress in Birds

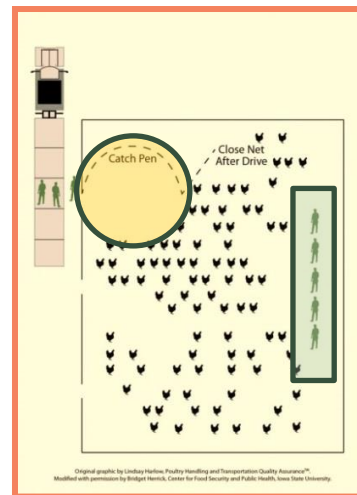
- Overheating
 - Red-flushed faces, combs, wattles
 - Rapid panting and open-mouthed breathing
- Lack of oxygen
 - Gasping and stretching of neck when breathing
 - Purple combs and wattles

Poultry Restraint

- Use slow, steady movements with minimal noise.
- Catch individual birds by grasping both legs, just above the feet.
- Support the bird's body
- Avoid too much pressure on thorax and compromising the ability to breathe.
- Carry the bird upright when possible.
Place your arm over the bird's wings to minimize flapping.

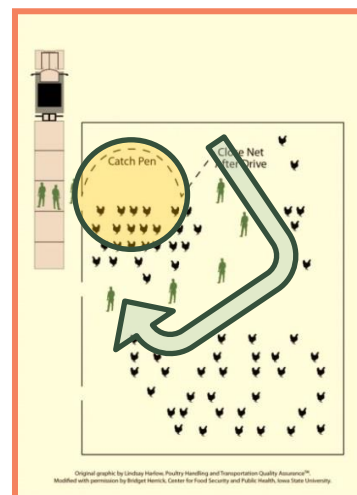
Herding Poultry Flocks

Flocks can be moved using herding principles similar to other livestock species



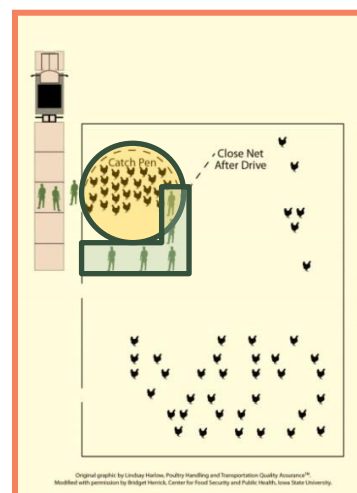
Herd the flock in small groups for easier movement.

Responders start in a straight line (green box) along the wall away from the catch pen (yellow circle).



Move slowly toward the catch pen. The drive line should wrap around to form a "J" shape (depicted by the green arrow) as it moves forward.

As the birds enter the catch pen, tighten the line into a reverse "L" formation (green box). After birds are within the catch pen, close the gate of the catch pen to ensure birds do not escape.



** Note: Do not put catch pens directly against the building wall. If a pile up of birds occurs, the net will need to be lifted to prevent injury to the birds on the bottom.

Additional Resources

- A Quality Assurance Program for Handlers and Transports of Poultry
<http://www.poultryhandling.org/pdf/JAN2011PHTQAwEb2.pdf>
- Federation of Animal Science Societies – Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching, Third Edition
<http://www.fass.org>

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