

Transporting Poultry in a Humane Manner

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During the summer and fall months, poultry owners are hauling poultry to fairs, markets and other gatherings. Unfortunately, very few people put much thought into how to best transport their fowl. As a result, birds don't show well, get sick or die in transit. These results can be avoided with a little planning and extra care. Consider the following factors before transporting fowl.

Ventilation:

During hot weather, good air flow through the crate is a must. **DO NOT** use air tight crates, trailers or trucks to haul poultry in warm weather. Use crates which allows the air to flow through. Use care not to stack the crates to disrupt the air circulation. **Never transport fowl in the trunk of an automobile since they may suffocate or die due to exhaust fumes or heat build-up.**

Remember, air circulation stops if you are stopped or in slow traffic. It may be necessary to open windows or doors until you get moving again.

Open air coops on open bed trucks and trailers can be too drafty at highway speeds and may cause eye and ear irritation, as well as, feather damage. Crates with closed sides and an open air top works best with open bed vehicles.

In cold weather, avoid drafts. Excessively cold drafts can cause frostbite and colds. So, adjust your methods of hauling for the weather conditions.

Avoid direct sunshine:

Don't place crates in the direct sunshine. Dark colored trailers and crates can become deadly ovens in hot, sunny weather. The temperature can be 20 degrees warmer in the sun. Shade the crate with a light colored material or paint the cart a light color.

Overcrowding:

Most hauling problems and deaths occur because of overcrowding. Allow enough space for the birds to sit comfortably during transport. Don't use crates which hold more than 4 to 6 adult birds. This will keep piling or fighting by birds to a minimum, improve air-circulation, and limit accumulation of body heat.

Once you arrive at your destination, birds should be allowed the following cage space. One-half square foot per bird for bantams and pigeons, 1 square foot per bird for large chickens and pheasants and 2 to 3 square feet per bird for ducks, geese and turkeys. Leaving the birds packed in the carrying crate is inhumane and makes it difficult for the buyers to observe.

Supply feed and water:

Birds should be watered every four hours. Carrying coops can be equipped with removable waterers since full waterers may spill while driving. When you stop to eat or drink, give the fowl a drink also.

Stack crates safely:

Before you begin driving, all crates should be secured so they can not tip or slide if you should stop or turn quickly.

Plenty of dry litter:

A deep layer of loose, dry litter will help the birds remain clean.

Other Precautions:

1. Avoid using wire bottomed cages. When you slide cages with wire floors, you can damage the toes of birds if they get caught between the wire and the floor.
2. Don't use crates which allow the birds to stick their heads outside of the crate. If they can stick their heads out of the crate, their necks can easily be accidentally broken if the crate shifts or are stacked.
3. Make sure the crate is securely closed. If birds get out of crates during transit, they can be lost or hurt.
4. Do not place two crates next to each other if they are both holding males and they can see each other. They may try to fight each other and damage their combs and feathers in transport.
5. If a bird is overtaken by the heat, cool them by spraying or dipping the bird in cool water. This should bring the bird's body temperature down to a safe level.
6. **DO NOT** transport your bird in an air conditioned vehicle. When you arrive at your destination the bird may not be able to adjust to the outside temperature. This stresses the bird and may result in the bird not showing well, sickness or death.
7. Take enough feed and water from home to care for your birds while traveling or at shows. Some birds will not consume water or feed that they are not accustomed to for the first day or more. By having water and feed they are used to, you can help them adjust.
8. Thoroughly clean and disinfect all crates after using. Reused litter and dirty crates promote the spread of bacteria, parasites and other contagious infections.
9. Store crates off of the floor and empty. This discourages rodents from using them as nests between uses.

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