

Buck-Wheat Bytes

Volume 1, Issue 3

November 2007

Winter is Here!

Even in the South, cold weather is moving in. What are some ways to help your birds stay happy and healthy through the winter?

Over the past year, getting ready for winter has been one of the frequently discussed topics on the Guineas.com Message Board. Of course, guinea-keepers in different parts of the country have different needs and different ways of coping with the cold weather (and different definitions of "cold weather"!) We've compiled some of their posts and ideas, outlining what they do to help their guineas cope with the cold.

3rd Annual Guinea Fowl Conference

The 2008 Guinea Fowl Conference is set for March 10-12 in Perryville, Arkansas, USA. Conference agenda topics and early registration information on page 4.

Buck-Wheat Bytes is a thrice-yearly publication of the Guinea Fowl International Association. Find us online at www.guineafowlinternational.org.

We welcome your comments, letters, articles, and photos. Send them to:
GFIA, PO Box 367, Paradise, TX 76073

or email them to:
president@guineafowlinternational.org

From the www.guineas.com Message Board – thoughts and questions about winterizing:

Posted by: **Barbi - TX**

I know that guineas don't like cold weather, so what do you do for them in the winter months? How do you keep their water from freezing? I know this is a little soon to think about cold weather, when it is sooooooo hot, but my husband is trying to get everything ready ahead of time.
Barbi

Posted by: **Siamese VA**

My guineas don't seem to mind cold weather. In fact, my coop is mostly an open "kennel" with a roof. I do put up tarps on the sides to keep the wind out. I have had chickens get frostbite-but my guineas have never had that problem.

Guineas HATE snow! If my guineas are free-ranging and it snows midday, they will fly up into the trees and refuse to come down for a day or two. So I usually just look at the weather report and keep them in, if we're expecting any major snow. (which doesn't happen very often here- I'm in zone 7)

If you have electricity in your coop, get some heated dog bowls. If not, just get some of those 3-gallon rubber feed bowls... that make it so easy to break the ice. Just turn them over & step on them a couple of times and all the ice will fall out. Plastic doesn't work well in cold weather because it breaks. (with the exception of the heated bowls)

Posted by: **MichaeleF WA**

I have a small enclosed "hen house" but find that my birds prefer to be outside in the protected run, even on coldest nights. (They had access to a low-hung

continued on page 2

heat lamp that would keep the interior roosts warm, but they chose to stay outside.)

They bear temps in low teens, with no effects. They choose.

The only other thing I add to the mix here in Western WA in very cold weather? I offer more "hot" supplements to their feed. Thin flakes of alfalfa hay (it's a legume, not local hay.) I break one up one a couple times a week, as it also gives them something to do if they are cooped also. In the deep litter, there is a lot of "kicking and scratching".

And I add sweet feed (Wet COB..Corn/Oats/Barley with molasses) I'm not stingy with just plain chicken scratch either. Corn is hot. Molasses is a good supplement in moderation.

Posted by: **CarINC**

I use a series of Infra-red lights, outlets thermostated to come on below 50 degrees. Mine are spoiled; guineas don't really need heat except to keep wet wattles from freezing or getting frostbit. You can coat the wattles with petroleum jelly to prevent that (tip thanks to BetsyOK) Here mine are in the coop with the infra red brooder lights on. You have to use heavy duty fixtures and electrical cords. If you don't have a thermostat, use a timer, (also heavy duty)



Posted by: **Wheejo**

I also add a quartz light for extremely cold days (since they emit more heat). Also, we use a heated base for the water, and add more cracked corn to the feed for body heat. For some reason, our flock seems to like the snow, and enjoy eating it. They leave cute tracks all over the yard. Only when it is deep is it a problem, then they wait for me to pick them up and carry them to better ground, so I also snowblow an area for them too.

Posted by: **Kritterkeeper**

I also add a heat light to the coop (which they share with the chickens) in the winter. And as far as their water I use a low wattage bulb (25 watts is usually sufficient for here) which I put in the hole of a concrete block and then sit my metal waterer on top of the hole.

Posted by: **Rhonda-MN**

our guineas have done extremely well in the cold days of winter here. Even on the coldest day they are out and about. Mine LOVE the snow! Maybe because they have seen it from the beginning of life (who knows) but they run inside and out talking up a storm when it snows. I used just plain old summer waterers last yr and am switching to the rubber ones this year. It sucked trying to thaw the plastic ones out. Many mornings I went out there to check scared to open the door thinking I would find 23 little frozen birds but they did just fine. We put plastic up over the windows, then they have the door that goes into the dog kennel attached to their hut. When we blow snow-IF they are out they follow you up and down the driveway... They are so entertaining even when it's below 0!

Posted by: **CindyTX**

As others have noted, guinea may not need extra heat – but they sure do like it! Especially Southern Guinea Fowl (Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, etc.) You'll see when it starts getting "cold" here (low 40's), the guineas will ruff out their neck feathers to keep warm - looks like they're getting out their turtleneck sweaters! This while others' guineas would think that a 40-degree day is delightful. I have infrared heat bulbs (red in color) in my coops in the winter, and I adjust outside timers so that they're on in the coldest part of the night, or all night if appropriate. One winter, when we had many nights in the low 20s, I put a small ceramic fan-heater in the metal coop (my wood coop stays warmer), and the guineas all perched in front of the warm breeze; you could tell they really enjoyed it.

Posted by: **JeanneAR**

Rubber tubs for my waterers, mucho deep litter on the cleaned floor, to last for several months. I do like to completely clean the coops, disinfect them, before winter hits, usually in Sept. Warm enough here to have it dry out well and such. I tend to make a watery mess when I clean the walls and stuff, so it's good to do it in hot weather. Guess I need to get busy on that then, now!

Cobwebs and spiders need to be taken care of, and tarps and wire, fixed or replaced. Checked for holes or weak spots.

I can't think of anything more at present. Worming in fall, if need be is good too.

Posted by: BarbaraNH

Temperatures here in New Hampshire are sometimes below zero, and the 40-watt bulbs we use seem to be sufficient. On really cold days (not going above zero for days at a time), we sometimes put in 60-watt bulbs for added warmth. We have two reflector domes over one perch and one reflector dome over another smaller perch (in a separate fenced-in section). I know some recommend using the red bulbs because they may help when fighting is a problem. We've never had major problems with the guineas not getting along in the winter. I think they're more concerned about keeping their feet beneath their feathers for warmth than they are about attacking each other.

Posted by: ZoeTX

When it's supposed to get down into the 20's for hours at a time, I put up the red heat light for my guineas as soon as it gets in the 40's. I have it tied to a cross bar with one of those plastic tie wrap things so that they can't knock it down. They do fight over who gets to be closest to it.

Posted by: BetsyOK

It does get pretty cold at times here in NE Oklahoma, though the weather fluctuates wildly, but several old timers have advised the birds are healthier if they are not provided with artificial heat. I usually wrap visqueen around the entire pen--though I'm only going to wrap the north and east sides this year. One winter I wrapped the entire pen (it's quite large) including the top, AND individually wrapped each small house--leaving spaces for ventilation. I was told that was too, too much and would make them weak and unable to stand cold weather if they had to face it. However, I worry about freezing the bantam roos' combs. Hasn't happened so far. We have a security light in our yard, and there's another just across the wet-weather creek, which makes it quite close to their pen. However, there is no light inside any of the houses

The guineas and each of the different varieties of bantams has its own small plywood house, as well as attached, open pen, and all are interconnected. I don't let late hatches happen, so there are no youngsters out there. We provide their water in heated dog dishes

in the winter. Even in the several winters when the guineas roosted in the trees, we had no weather mishaps, with the possible exception of the one male who had one toe slightly larger than the others. This is another case where individual preference and suitability to local weather, housing, and other conditions make a wide variety of practices appropriate.



In climates where it gets extremely cold/snowy/wet during the winter, it might be necessary to keep your guineas confined for days at a time. In that case, you may want to build them a run where they can exercise and forage in a protected area. The photo above is from CarlINC – what he calls his Guinea Palace.

Below, either an infrared heat lamp or a regular floodlight can be used to provide some additional warmth in the guinea coop. Infrared heat lamp bulbs should be used only in ceramic fixtures or clamp-lights with a ceramic base; they can become too hot in plastic fixtures. Both bulbs are available in red, which may be less disturbing to a guinea's sleep pattern.





Guinea Fowl Conference 2008

March 10-12
At Heifer Ranch Conference Center
Perryville, Arkansas, USA

We are working with the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education group's Small-Scale Poultry Workshop, which will provide us with information on organic feeding of our poultry and non-medical means of controlling worms and other parasites.

The conference site, at the Heifer Ranch (just northwest of Little Rock, AR), will give us the opportunity to learn about the work of Heifer International.

For more information, or to register, contact cd@guineafowlinternational.org or call 979-773-9100.

- To support the responsible keeping and breeding of Guinea Fowl.
- To educate on the care and habits of Guinea Fowl.
- To offer assistance to those interested in the incubation, hatching and keeping of Guinea Fowl.

GFIA
PO Box 367
Paradise, TX 76073

BULK RATE
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT No. 00000

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

