



GOT CHICKENS? GOT PREDATORS. NO PROBLEM!



1. IDENTIFY THE CULPRIT

Who are the likely predators in your area: foxes, hawks, owls, coyotes, raccoons, and opossums tend to be the most common. If you know which predators are likely to attack, then you can create effective defenses to stop them. All can be deterred by simple backyard security.

2. BURY CHICKEN WIRE

One thing to remember: chicken wire will keep chickens in; hardware mesh will keep predators out. Bury hardware mesh at least 2 feet deep around the compound- 4 feet deep would be ideal. Dig a trench about 6 inches deep and 3 inches wide and bury the hardware mesh to create an underground security perimeter. This will deter most predators from digging. If you are using a chicken tractor instead of a run, the same principal applies. Cover the floor of the tractor in hardware mesh.

3. COVER THEIR COOP

Aerial predators like hawks are common. You can use chicken wire to cover your run- this still provides your chickens with visibility but stops predators from swooping down and attacking your flock.

4. INCREASE VISIBILITY

If you are fortunate enough to have a large garden, make sure you cut down any tall grass, bush or overgrown areas within 50-75 feet of your coop. The less cover a predator has, the more vulnerable they are at being seen before attacking.

5. BLOCK ANY ACCESS HOLES

Make sure you regularly check your coop for any access holes. A weasel can squeeze through the tiniest of holes. Remember to check your coop at least monthly for signs of attempted entry and reinforce those areas. Prevent predators with savvy climbing skills from entering through the roof of your coop. Lining your coop, or even fencing with metal siding will prevent these agile critters from getting a grip on your fencing, and climbing to the top and over. It is easy for small predators, like snakes, to slither into coops and eat your eggs, and even your chickens. Closing off all access holes, while allowing for proper ventilation, can be a challenge. The best way to solve this is to have openings for ventilation at the top of the coop and prevent predators from climbing into the holes.

6. LOCK YOUR LADIES UP AT NIGHT

Use a mechanism, like a carabiner, that can't be opened by smart creatures like raccoons. Also remember to use a padlock to keep out the ultimate predator – man.

7. CHECK YOUR BIOSECURITY

Make sure you clean up your pen in the evening - pay spe-

cial attention to any scraps and food lying around. Rats are attracted by leftover food. Once they have moved in, they may eat eggs and chicks. If you see rats during the daytime, it's likely you have a serious problem.

8. BE ALERT FOR SNAKES

Check your coop daily for snakes. Black, rat and corn snakes will pilfer eggs and on occasion, small chicks. Keep in mind that snakes help control the rodent population!

9. COLLECT EGGS DAILY

If you make sure to collect your eggs frequently during the day you will deter many predators.

10. FIT MOTION SENSOR LIGHTING

Predators, such as raccoons are more active at night. You can fit solar powered motion-detection lights to your coop to deter predators. The light will turn on when it detects any motion near the coop. They can also be modified to send you an alarm when the lights are activated. Most predators will simply run away from the spotlight.

IF YOU FREE-RANGE CHICKENS ...

Free ranging comes with inherent risk and people should expect casualties. Losses are most often seen in the spring. We recommend supervised free range and at varied times during the day and year.

11. HANG YOUR OLD CDS

One effective way is to hang unwanted CDs from trees, posts etc. The reflection of the sun from the CD may deter predators. You can also use pie pans, disco balls – anything that will reflect light. Note: Do not use mirrors; you don't want to accidentally start a fire!

12. USE ELECTRIC FENCES

Electric fencing is a must! It is fairly inexpensive and easy to install.

13. INSTALL SAFETY SHELTERS

Make a couple of safety shelters for your birds to run into. You can use a 55-gallon plastic drum cut lengthways or a wooden pallet perched on blocks. If your chickens get caught out whilst they are roaming they can run underneath these safety shelters to keep covered.

14. GET A LIVESTOCK GUARDIAN ANIMAL

We only recommend this option if you are able to provide care for these animals, since it is an added expense. A dog does the same job as a rooster – only better. Dogs can range further away from the flock and the scent of a dog is very disturbing to most predators. Make sure your dog is good with your chickens before you leave them together unattended.

