



# BEDDING

## WHAT KIND OF BEDDING DO CHICKENS HAVE ACCESS TO IN THE BARN?

Typical bedding materials in a chicken house may include: rice hulls, straw, wood chips or peanut shells. These dry, absorbent materials help keep the ground dry and soft for the chickens.

### HOW DOES THE BEDDING STAY CLEAN AND DRY?

Highly advanced heating and ventilation systems in a chicken house play a primary role in keeping the bedding dry and comfortable for the flock. Although the heating and ventilation systems are highly automated, chicken farmers still make sure to walk the chicken house multiple times per day to ensure the flock is not too cool or too hot, but also to ensure the litter is 'friable' – easily broken up/crumbled. If the litter becomes too cakey or is not moist enough, it can affect the health of the flock and must be replaced.

If the moisture content is kept under control, litter can be reused between flocks through a process called "windrowing" which pasteurizes the poultry litter. The heat from composting process kills unwanted pathogens.

### IS BEDDING THE SAME AS POULTRY LITTER?

No, poultry litter is the mixture of bedding, excrement, spilled feed and even feathers. Poultry litter is also in high demand after it is removed from the chicken house. Traditional uses of litter include use as an organic fertilizer or potting material, and even fuel. This video shows how farmers remove poultry litter and reuse it on the farm.



### IS POULTRY LITTER REPLACED WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF EACH FLOCK?

Unless there is disease or a biosecurity issue, total replacement of the poultry litter is not required for every new flock. The litter can be recycled over several flocks so as to minimize impact on the environment due to waste disposal.

With recycled litter, the farmer is responsible for removing caked or wet areas of the bedding. The old litter is stirred in between flocks and generally 1 to 2 inches of fresh litter is placed on top of the old litter before the arrival of the hatchlings. The recycled litter is further sanitized through windrowing, which kills any pathogens in the poultry litter through pasteurization.

Learn more about chicken housing and bedding in these videos from our Day in the Life video series:

- [Biosecurity and Health Management on Chicken Farms](#)
- [Housing and Ventilation Systems on the Farm](#)
- [Monitoring and Maintaining the Health of the Chicken Flock](#)