

# Poultry Wound Care

By Rebecca Sanderson

Be prepared before your chicken gets injured by having both the supplies and knowledge for chicken wound care.



## Before Treatment

Wrap your bird gently in an old, clean towel to prevent them from hurting themselves (or you). If your bird is not in serious condition, treating at night may calm them. Take them away from the flock. If the wound bleeds heavily, apply wound powder and light pressure for 10 minutes.

## Clean the Wound

Pour or squirt a saline solution into the wound to clean out dirt and debris. Purchase in first aid sections or mix four cups of (cooled) boiled water and two teaspoons of salt (non-iodized, with no anti-caking agents). Use tweezers to grab larger pieces of debris. The foaming action of hydrogen peroxide can lift debris out but is damaging to soft tissues and should only be used as a last resort. Gently dab the wound dry with a gauze pad.

## Treat the Wound

To prevent infection, keep a few types of antibacterial products handy. A simple spray such as Blu-Kote disinfects small wounds and colors the area purple to prevent pecking. For larger wounds, povidone-iodine is a broad-spectrum antimicrobial available over the counter. Gently pour iodine on the wound and allow to air dry. You may follow with antibiotic ointment for dry wounds or antimicrobial powder for oozing wounds.

## Dress the Wound

For minor feather picking or superficial scratches, Blu-Kote is usually enough covering to aid in healing. If not, clip or pluck away feathers that may get in the wound. If no longer bleeding and where the bird will not peck it, you may leave it open. Otherwise, cover with a gauze pad and tape it around the wound or make a body wrap around the bird to hold the dressing in place.

## After Treatment

Keep your bird isolated until it heals. Your healing bird needs rest, warmth, quiet, and no more stress, to avoid shock. Be sure they have adequate food and water.

## Treating Infection

Infection is easier to spot if you check under the dressing daily or opt not to use a dressing. An infected wound will be red, may ooze pus or fluid, and the scab may get larger as time passes. If a wound isn't healing within two weeks, assume it is infected. Remove the scab, softening it first by repeatedly applying a thick ointment such as zinc oxide or Ichthammol. This may take a day or even two. Clean out the infection using saline solution and retreat the wound just as before.

## Special Considerations

If the wound is from an animal bite, you may need a stronger antibiotic such as Terramycin. Also, if the chicken's wound doesn't stay closed with a simple dressing or is multiple layers deep, it may need stitches. This is best done by a veterinarian or other professional.

