



Debeaking Poultry

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CANNIBALISM – PICKING AND FEATHER PULLING – is a major problem in many farm flocks.

The most successful means of controlling cannibalism is to debeak. This is done by cutting off a portion of the upper beak only to prevent the birds from getting a firm grasp on feathers or skin.

Debeaking can be done with –

1. **Electric debeaker** – preferred for all types of debeaking because it cauterizes as it cuts. High in cost, but can be borrowed or rented from almost all hatcheries and many feed stores.
2. **Dog Toe Nail Clipper** – preferred by many for debeaking small chicks and turkey poults. It is low priced, fast, takes no extra skill and can be purchased at animal supply counters.

The clipper is not recommended for old birds.

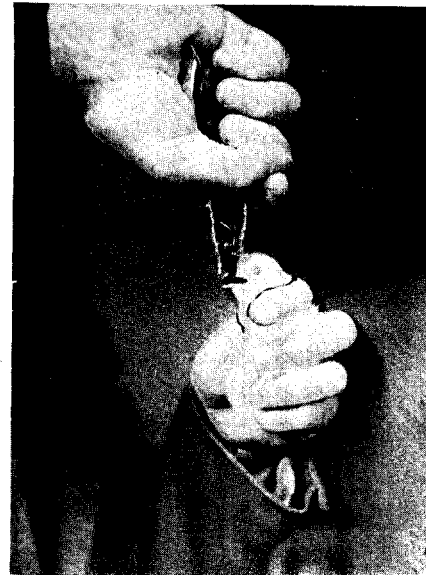
3. **Knife or Scissors** – when necessary, use a sharp knife or scissors to trim back beaks. However, both the knife and scissors are slow, and the results may not be as good or as lasting, as with an electric debeaker or a clipper.

Day old chicks can be debeaked successfully. However, it is better to wait until they are 7 to 14 days of age before cutting the beak. Many people wait until trouble develops in the flock before they debeak.

Electric debeaking of baby chicks should be done with a special blade, smaller than that used to debeak large chickens or turkeys. If care is taken to prevent burning the operator's hand, or to avoid cutting off too much of the beak, the regular blade can be used.

The dog toe nail clipper works fine for baby chicks.

Cut the chick beak no shorter than midway between the tip and the nostril.

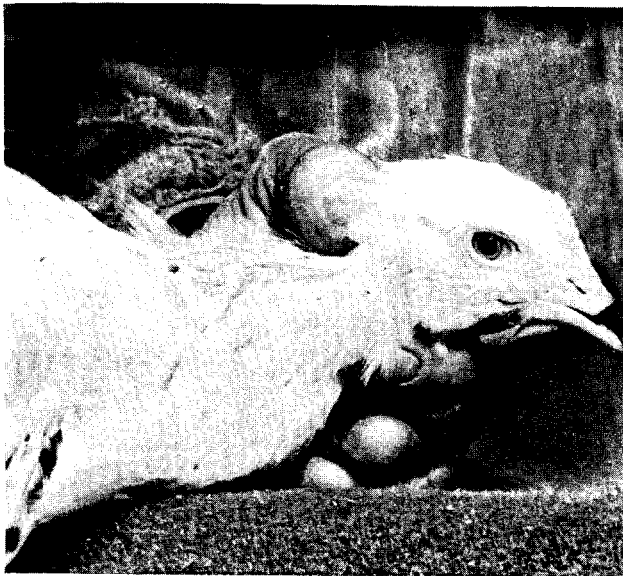


Debeaking chick with dog toe nail clipper.

A good time to debeak pullets is when they are housed in the fall. Use an electric debeaker and regular blade. The dog toe nail clipper is not recommended for debeaking pullets.

Cut the beak back to a point one-half to two-thirds the distance between the tip and the nostril. Some authorities recommend squaring the lower beak by cutting off the sharp tip only.

If birds are debeaked at housing time, the beak will not grow back to any great extent during the next laying year.



Debeaked pullet.

Some growers debeak poults at one week of age or earlier. Debeaking poults at 6 to 8 weeks of age, or when they are put on range, is more successful because the beak does not grow out before the birds reach marketing age. If cannibalism does develop in the brooder house, debeak the poults as soon as trouble develops.

Turkey poults can be debeaked either with an electric debeaker or with a dog toe nail clipper. When debeaking poults, cut back the upper beak



Debeaked turkey poult.

only and cut it back two-thirds of the distance from the tip of the nostril.

Debeaking toms to prevent fighting in the fall can be done with an electric debeaker, or the beak can be trimmed with the dog toe nail clipper.

The electric debeaker is preferred.

Turkey toms to be used in the breeder flock should not be debeaked.

RURAL CIVIL DEFENSE TIP

After any disaster, natural or nuclear, the land will be here if people are here to till it.
Protect yourself first. Make your farm and family emergency survival plans now.