

## Vaccination in Poultry

Most vaccinations are made for commercial units and are in doses of 1000 birds or above. Even so, these are still relatively cheap and any extra doses can be discarded. For most backyard flocks, vaccination is unnecessary unless you encounter a particular disease problem within your chickens or you are frequently buying and selling hens. No vaccine is 100% effective, but they can help to control disease. If you are buying new birds, check what they have been vaccinated against, many ex-commercial hens will have already had some vaccinations.

Most vaccinations are given at and around birth, vaccinating an older hen is less likely to be as effective as if they were vaccinated with a primary course when younger. Also poultry vaccinations are not thought to be so effective in outside birds. Many vaccinations will not cover and protect you bird for life so boosters may be needed; speak to your vet for advice.

Vaccinating can also hide diseases within a flock so when a new unvaccinated bird is brought in they may contract the disease, if you decide to start vaccinating then you should continue with all birds in your flock. Silkies and Sebrights particularly should be vaccinated against Mareks as they are at risk of developing signs.

**Mycoplasma:** Not normally used in backyard poultry. Vaccinate only if you have had a past problem or in very high value birds.

**Coccidia:** Only used for commercial birds, which are vaccinated at 1-9d old.

**Mareks disease-** vaccinated at a day old if you have had previous problems, but it is unlikely to cover for life. If you start to vaccinate then you must vaccinate future chicks.

**Respiratory diseases (infectious bronchitis etc.):** only needs to be vaccinated if the disease is present in your flock, blood tests can be taken to check if your birds are affected by any of these viruses.

**Salmonella:** used in commercial flocks, can be used in backyard poultry also, 2 vaccinations are needed 4 weeks apart with an annual booster. With good hygiene and bio-security this should not be necessary. Flocks with over 500 birds are responsible for vaccinating their hens for salmonella and stamping any eggs and should be registered with DEFRA.

