

# WATER, THE PRIME INGREDIENT

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It's wintertime. The Temperature is hovering in the single digits, and the wind chill factor is several degrees below zero. The alarm clock rings at 6 a.m. and I go through my same routine.

While others are lying in bed or warming up their cars, I am dressing and "schlepping" buckets of warm water to my bantam chickens.

I have a friend who collects baseball cards, another who likes to rebuild junked automobiles. They both think my hobby of raising purebred bantam chickens is a little daft. They regard my morning routine (and sometimes evening routine) of carrying warm water to my birds as bordering on lunacy. This does not deter me in the slightest.

Due in large measure to my daily routine of bringing warm water to my bantams, they stay alive and well. They also reward me with eggs even on the coldest of days.

I've always been puzzled by the poultry raisers who argue about the percentage of protein to provide their poultry in winter. Many of these same raisers take pretty much of a ho-hum attitude about providing the birds with fresh warm water each day, sometimes twice a day during the winter months.

Water is perhaps the single most important ingredient in the production of good show birds and eggs.

Experiments done by the Pacific coast Poultry Breeders several years ago showed that leaving poultry without water for as little period of time as 24 hours can have disastrous results. It oftentimes requires an additional day for each hour that the birds were without water to get them back into normal egg production.

The same study also showed that poultry that went without water for 36 hours failed to return the original egg production level they were at when the water deprivation began.

When the hens were deprived of water continuously for periods of 48-60 hours, they became severely dehydrated. So much so, in fact, that a large percentage not only stopped laying, but many actually died.

Another point to consider, when poultry which have been without water for an extended period of time are returned to accessible water, the breeder must exert caution. If not, the parched birds may over drink. This over drinking can be disastrous causing otherwise healthy birds to become ill.

Water above the birds' normal bodily requirements is a necessity if the hens are expected to lay eggs too.

Lest anyone forget, approximately 65 percent of an egg is water. It is probably the mystery factor in the puzzle which enables that little space capsule known as an egg to hatch.

So even on bitterly cold January mornings, and evenings, when the temperatures are five degrees below zero and the wind chill index is 45 below zero, you will find me "schlepping" warm water to my bantam chickens.

It's the very least I can do to keep them healthy, happy, and laying eggs.