

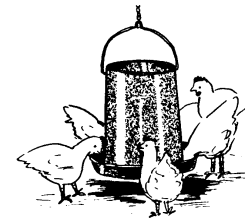


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**Cooperative Extension Service**

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## ***BACKYARD FLOCK...***

### **FEED REMOVAL BEFORE HOME PROCESSING**

In order to produce a wholesome product for the dinner table, poultry must be dressed under sanitary and hygienic conditions. Manure adhering to the feet or vent feathers should be removed before scalding to ensure the water remains clean. With a little practice, the digestive tract, from the crop to the intestine, can be removed without spillage of contents onto the edible carcass. Even for those with experience, this is much easier to do if we have followed proper procedures for feed removal prior to slaughter.

It stands to reason that if feed is removed too long prior to slaughter, the bird may begin to lose weight. Of more concern is the fact that after 12 or 14 hours without feed, the intestines become a bit fragile, frequently having watery contents. If a bird has been without feed for too long, the possibility of breaking the intestines and contaminating the carcass is increased. At the other extreme, if we allow birds access to feed up until slaughter, the digestive tract will be full of feed and more likely to break during dressing. A question frequently asked by backyard poultry producers is how long feed should be removed before slaughter, and whether water also should be restricted during this period.

Research by Poultry Extension Specialists at the University of Georgia has shed a good bit of light on this subject. First, there appears no reason to restrict the bird's access to water. By continuing to drink, the bird will be better able to eliminate undigested feed residues from the body. In addition, during the warm summer months, chickens need constant access to water to resist heat stress. The feed itself should be removed from 8 to 10 hours before slaughter. This allows the bird adequate time to digest the feed it has previously consumed and eliminate much of the undigested residue from the intestines. By using an 8 to 10 hour feed withdrawal period, the likelihood of rupturing the intestines during processing is vastly reduced.

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### **PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK**

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State College, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating.  
The Cooperative Extension service officers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability  
An equal opportunity/affirmative action organization committed to a diverse work force..