



Pre-Winter housekeeping

Cleaning and getting your set-up ready for Winter

Choose a sunny day and take the coop apart as much as possible, use an old paint scraper to clear off any dried droppings, scrub it all with a bucket brush and hot soapy water. Preferably allow it to dry in the sun (the UV light will kill mites and bacteria) or dry off with old towels. Spray each panel, and the inside of the roof with [Total Mite Kill ready to use spray](#); this is a disinfectant as well as a brilliant mite knock down product. Once that's dried – it does this really quickly – powder all the cracks and corners, roosting bar brackets and nest boxes with [Buz Busters Louse Powder](#).

With winter fast approaching, us poultry keepers need to make a start on preparing our flocks' housing for the colder months; they will be spending far more time in the run and coop than when there's more daylight, and the worsening weather will mean that repairs should be made now.

It pays to keep on top of the weekly feeder and drinker disinfection in the winter too, as they can get quite muddy, leading to a build-up of bacteria – a large tub or small barrel with a dilution of [Viratec-P](#) is great to soak them in. Be sure to hang both the feeders and drinkers on a level with the chickens' backs rather than resting on the floor, where litter and faeces can get into them.



Check all parts and the roof for anything which needs repairing, if your roof needs fixing, then this is a good time to replace the felt with some Onduline, which is more resistant to red mites. Check that the run is still secure and has a clear waterproof roof on it to give them somewhere dry to shelter in the bad weather – birds allowed to paddle around in damp litter will soon develop bacterial or fungal foot problems. With the flock being confined to the run more during the darker days, it will need mucking out more frequently, so a weekly sprinkle with [Ground Sanitising Powder](#) will keep down any harmful bacteria and intestinal worm eggs. You can also use this on the ground before replacing the litter every couple/few of weeks, or as needed – we use a shredded hemp bedding (equine) which is brilliant at drying out droppings and composts wonderfully afterwards.



With harder weather on the way, it's important to make sure that your housing and run are weather and waterproof; clear tarpaulins with bungee hooks are excellent and easy to tie down when a storm is due. Come December, we can probably expect to see DEFRA's Avian Influenza prevention zones in force again, so our flocks will need to be kept under cover and away from contact with wild bird droppings; clear waterproof covers like this on your run will suffice. Be careful though not to block the coop's ventilation; these are essential to prevent a build-up of ammonia.