Quick Tips

Handling your birds the right way keeps both them and you safe. This guide covers basic tips and how to hold different types of smaller birds.

Head First

Guide birds in and out of the cage head-first, supporting them from underneath as you lift.

Secure Wings

Hold wings against the body to prevent flapping and injury.

Handle Gently

Support the breast; avoid grabbing wings or legs only unless using a proper hold.

Breathe Easy

Never squeeze the chest. Birds need to be able to expand their chest to breathe.

Watch for Stress

Open-mouth breathing, tremors, or regurgitation mean the bird needs a break.

Fun Facts

Cooling Trick

Chickens can't sweat, they cool themselves by panting and spreading their wings, so avoid handling them too long in hot weather.

Fast Reflexes

Quail and pheasants explode into flight when startled. Handle them calmly and securely.

Resources

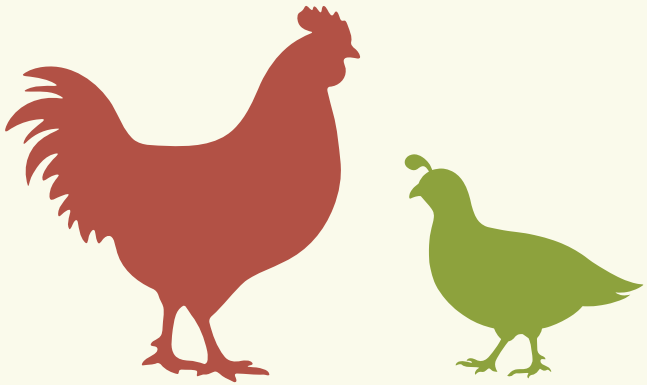
www.healthybirds.info

Facebook
Small Flocks Collaborative

Instagram
@smallflocks_healthybirds

BIRD HANDLING FOR YOUR SMALL FLOCKS

How to properly hold your smaller birds, like chickens and gamebirds



Use these tips to hold your birds and build a trusting, safe relationship

SMALL FLOCKS COLLABORATIVE

Chickens

To handle light-bodied birds like layers, place both hands over the wings and gently scoop the bird up from the ground. Support the breast with one hand under the body, letting your fingers rest between the legs, and use your other hand to keep the wings tucked in. You can lift these birds by the body or both legs if you hold close to the body. Avoid lifting by the wings unless briefly, and only at the base where the wings meet the body.

Over-the-body hold, to lift bird safely from the ground.

Breast support hold, with legs secured

View of leg grip from underneath the chicken

Breast support hold, with legs and wings secured

Gamebirds

Gamebirds like pheasants, quail, and partridge are flighty and fragile, so handle them with care. In a pen, you can use a net to catch the birds. Be aware that they can fly at you, so use caution in a pen. You can use a one-handed hold by gripping the thigh and wing together to keep the bird secure, or hold both legs together while supporting the body with your other hand. Always keep the wings tucked in to prevent injury from flapping.

One-handed gamebird hold, thigh and wing secured to control movement.

Gamebird hold, one hand secures wings and body, the other supports the legs.

Full support hold with legs, breast, and wings secured with hand.