Pests and Predators

SMALL FLOCKS COLLABORATIVE

What to Know

Know the signs of pests and predators and what steps to take in order to protect your flock.

1 Predators and Their Signs

- Raccoons, foxes, coyotes, hawks, owls, snakes, dogs, bears, bobcats, mountain lions, and cats can kill birds.
- **Signs**: missing birds, bite marks, scattered feathers, dug-out edges, and broken latches.
- Most attacks happen at night. Secure the coop before sunset.

2 Predator-Proof Coop

- Use ½-inch hardware cloth—not chicken wire.
- Bury fencing 8–12 inches to prevent digging.
- Cover the run to block out raptors.
- Make sure all your birds are in the coop at night.
- Use locking latches on all doors and nest boxes.

3 Rodents, Insects, and Wild Birds

- Rodents chew through feed, steal eggs, and spread germs.
- Flies and darkling beetles breed in wet bedding and attract predators. Use proper insect control.
- Wild birds may spread diseases to your flock, so keep them out.

4 Lice and Mites

- Lice feed on skin and feathers. Mites feed on blood and hide in the coop.
- Spread through wild birds, dirty housing, or new birds.
- **Signs**: feather loss, scabs, pale combs, itching, restlessness.
- Provide dust baths with dry dirt or diatomaceous earth.
- Treat both birds and coop using poultry-safe sprays or powders.

5 Healthy Habits to Keep Pests OUT

- Clear brush and debris around the coop.
- Keep bedding dry and clean out droppings regularly.
- Seal cracks in walls, roofs, and nest boxes.
- Store feed in sealed containers and clean up spilled feed.
- Use covered feeders and avoid open water pans.