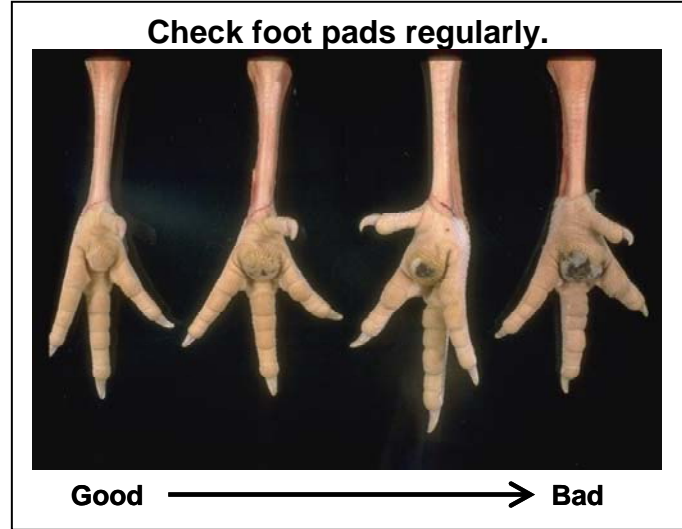


## Foot Pad Health and Your Small Poultry Flock

A foot pad is the soft, fleshy area on the underside of a bird's foot where the three large toes meet. The pad should be free of cuts, scabs or abscesses.

Foot pad health is an issue for birds housed on litter flooring – especially during the winter months when the birds may be forced to spend long periods on wet, ammonia saturated litter. Damage to the foot pads is painful and can lead to leg problems and bacterial infections. Soft, dry litter will keep the bottoms of your birds' feet in good condition. You should inspect the birds' feet every week to spot any foot pad problems early when they are easy to correct.



The methods of promoting good foot pad health include:

- Apply fresh straw to provide a dry top coat layer in straw-based litter systems.
- Consider switching from straw to wood shavings as a bedding material. Shavings are more absorbent and do not pack as much as straw.
- Install slats under the drinkers so that the birds' feet do not touch the wet litter.
- Provide smooth surfaces for the birds to walk on. For example, the edges of newly built perches, nests or slats should be sandpapered to prevent splinters and abrasions.
- Manage the litter and ventilation to prevent wet spots. See the MAFRI web page, "Ammonia and Your Small Flock of Laying Hens" for more details.

These techniques will keep your birds' feet healthy year round.