

Suffield Veterinary Hospital February 2025 Patient of the Month

Meet Pip AKA "Pip Squeak," a 6-month-old silver Orpington chicken owned by our head technician Ali. Pip is one of five hens in her flock who faithfully provide eggs and bring enjoyment to her and her family. Pip was brought in to SVH after Ali noticed some bleeding, lesions, and swelling around Pips eyes and comb. At first, we wondered if she was being picked on by the other hens due to her being a bit more aloof from the rest. Pip, the lowest in the flock's pecking order, started out as the smallest, but has since grown to be the fluffiest of them all. Another concern was the possibility of frostbite as a result of the recent frigid temperatures. As it turned out, she injured herself on a wire she had dug down to. This wiring was placed to keep predators out of the coop by preventing them from digging under it. Pip was kept separated to treat her eyelid with a topical ointment. After a short time, she made a full recovery and was returned to her flock, good as new.



Keeping backyard chickens healthy, especially in the winter, takes some extra effort. Here are some tips for success: Provide roosts within the coop to offer elevated space for hens to rest and to keep them off the cold floor. While roosting, chickens can comfortably lay on their feet to keep warm and provide enough space to fluff their feathers and even huddle together for warmth. It is important to manage drafts and insulate your coop by inspecting for holes or cracks, which can allow for airflow or rodents to enter. Provide supplemental warmth with safe radiant heaters or heating bulbs when outside temperatures fall below 35oF. At the same time, it is important to keep coops ventilated with a roof vent or a partially opened south facing screened window. This will help keep excess moisture and ammonium from building up. These can increase the risk of frostbite. Keeping the coop clean of manure is key to controlling moisture as well. During the cold weather, it is important to keep the run insulated and block excess wind by using plastic wraps or reusable corrugated sheets. Chicken feed will need to be increased by 25% to provide proper nutrition for healthy hens and continued laying. With their normal feed, providing scratch or even leftovers from your meals and plenty of greens will be loved by the flock. Prevent your chickens' water source from freezing by using a heated water container. It is also important, with the change in light throughout the day, to provide a light source. Chickens should receive 12-14 hours of light from just before sunrise to just after sunset. You can do this with an electrical timer.

Thankfully, Ali and Pip are taking these steps to ensure the flock is happy, healthy, and continuing to lay eggs. For giving us an opportunity to get the word out about keeping a flock of chickens at its healthiest, and for being so darned cute, we are happy to name Pip Squeak our February 2025 Patient of the Month.

Suffield Veterinary Hospital

Dr. Ann Huntington ❖ Dr. Anita Sabellico ❖ Dr. Dawn Burke

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