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TAKE A LOOK AT THE FULL SCHEDULE!
QUESTION: How does one deal with laying hens once they are "spent"? I am Buddhist and killing them is not an option for me.

Dear Buddhist,
Thanks for your question. Contemplating the complexities of life is one of religion’s bailiwicks. And yet, despite our sincerity, there still doesn’t seem to be a rule-book for every situation in life. Something we do know is that Buddhism is practiced in numerous countries, by about 500 million people worldwide, which represents 7% of the world’s population. And thanks to world-wide travel, vast communication, and great access to multi-cultural ideas, we know that Buddhism is practiced differently in different regions. In many of these regions, like Thailand, Sri Lanka, Japan, China, and India, the Buddhists are land-based, farming-based, or fishing-based peoples.

And as farmers we are often dealing with the cycles of life and death—the seasons, different types of growing situations, the vicissitudes of weather, etc. For those of us who are integrating animals into our farming systems, the question becomes: how do we consciously and compassionately deal with the cycle of life and death? One of the joys and challenges of being a farmer is being up close and personal with those questions on a daily basis.

Here are some suggestions about what to do with chickens that are past laying productivity. Hopefully these answers honor both the life cycle of farming and the desire for not contributing to suffering of another.

1. Keep the chickens until they die natural deaths. If you only have a few birds, you can let them live out their days scratching around your yard/farm. When they’re not producing eggs, they need minimal food, which for 3 seasons of the year they can find themselves if left to forage outside. A handful of grain now and again will supplement their diets and keep them on the tame side. In the winter, especially in snow and ice cover, there will need to be food provided. If you have a much larger flock, this solution is likely untenable unless there is a large area for them to roam and you don’t mind them scratching up your land, as chickens can be hard on pasture cover.

2. Offer them to a farm sanctuary. There are such things as farm sanctuaries, where compassion-minded folks take in animals that otherwise would be sent to slaughter. These farms however incur significant expenses, as one can imagine, having to procure feed, provide shelter, and incur labor expenses. If you plan to bring your farm animals to a shelter, please support the shelter financially so they are able to keep doing what they’re doing.

3. Give away your chickens to people in need......

Four More Ideas - READ MORE!
NEW EVENTS

2/13: Charcuterie Intensive
2/16: Climate Resilience

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