

## Getting in TTouch with Your Chicken

By Adam Rogers in UK – Tellington TTouch Practitioner

Having worked in animal rescue circles for many years, I have been lucky enough to meet many people with an overwhelming love of their pet fowl. Some had kept fowl for years, others had just rescued a few ex-battery hens, and all loved their pets dearly. Owners of dogs or cats have many ways of showing their pets affection and improving their lives, dogs can be taken to agility classes and cats can be bought toys and played with, but what can owners offer their poultry other than food, security and love? As a Tellington TTouch Practitioner I was used to using the technique on dogs, cats, rabbits and snakes, I had even used it on owls and parrots. I was sure that chickens and the like would enjoy the benefits of this work as much as any dog or cat. The TTouch offers a real opportunity for poultry owners to interact with their pets in a whole new way. It can only be a good thing to build deeper bonds with our fowl especially if increased vet visits.

Birds enjoy feather slides as it simulates self-grooming. These can be done by gently circling the feather near the root and then lightly slide to the end of the feather, making sure that you follow the direction that the feather grows; or you can do the slide without the circle.

Most of the time, clockwise circles are the most effective for strengthening and rehabilitating the body, as well as improving self-confidence and performance. However, there are times when counter clockwise circles are appropriate for releasing tension.

One of the most important of the TTouches is the Ear TTouch, in all animals it is calming and benefits the digestion. It can also aid in times of illness and shock, helping to stabilize the animal whilst on the way to the vet. Although chickens have no external ear flaps they do still have an ear hole (just behind the eye on the head). By slowly and gently circling the skin around the ear hole it is possible to quickly calm a stressed or agitated



Using a feather may be a less threatening way to make contact with any bird. You can stroke with the feather or bring it under the feathers and do a small circle.



Show starting light TTouches using just one finger to work around the ear opening. This can help with shock or stress. Notice how the chicken has begun to close her eyes in relaxation.



Taking your fingers carefully under the feathers you can do TTouches at the base of the feather and then gently stroke out to the end of the feather in the direction of growth.

When applying the TTouch we are aiming to give the animals' body and central nervous system new and non-habitual experiences. These help to bring about a new feeling of self-confidence. Well-balanced animals have a greater feeling of confidence than those individuals that are uncoordinated. By gently circling the chicken's wings, one at a time, it is possible to help improve balance and coordination. This exercise is extremely useful for ex-battery hens that have little idea of how to use their wings in a coordinated manner.

The TTouch circles can be used all over the bird's body; I have found that they are particularly enjoyed under the wings and on the crop. Although TTouch is NEVER an alternative to Veterinary care, the use of TTouches on the crop may help birds recovering from an impaction. These circles on the crop are often very relaxing to the birds and often they will sit with you without any persuasion. It is important to allow the bird to stand whilst having the TTouch as this helps to instill confidence in the process.

Above all it is important that you remain to be as relaxed as possible whilst giving your birds this wonderful experience. The more relaxed you can be the more your birds will enjoy the TTouch. With time, patience and calm determination you can not only help to reduce timidity and increase confidence in your birds but you can also develop an amazingly deep relationship based on trust to blossom.



Python Lifts on the chicken's chest is usually very relaxing.



Photos left & above: Feather slides are done gently in the direction of the feather growth and can be done, with or without, circling the feather near the root. It seems to simulate grooming.

Working gently under the wings can help improve balance & coordination.

