

Keeping chickens

Producing eggs in your backyard

Lead does not belong in the human body. When it gets into our bodies, it can make high blood pressure worse and cause kidney problems. Lead can also harm kids' brain development, which may cause behaviour and learning problems that can last a lifetime.



One of the ways lead can get into the human body is by eating eggs or chickens that have been raised on lead-contaminated soil.

Hens scratch in the dirt and peck food from the ground, and the lead can then transfer into the chickens themselves and their eggs.

Research suggests that lead contamination of soils at the levels typically found in Mount Isa may result in unacceptable levels of lead in eggs raised for eating.

How to keep chickens in Mount Isa

It is still possible to eat eggs from chickens raised in Mount Isa, if you follow some simple precautions.

- ▶ Keep chickens on clean soil
- ▶ Keep chickens away from areas that may have been contaminated by lead-based paint (like sheds and outbuildings, fences, and areas where old building materials have been stored)

Examples of good chicken keeping practices

- ▶ Put 200 mm of clean soil on top of a barrier such as shade cloth to prevent the chickens from accessing the soil below. If you live close to the mines, get your soil lead levels checked every few years and replace soil as necessary.
- ▶ Build your chicken yard with a concrete floor, and a 100-150 mm layer of straw, wood shaving or rice hulls.
- ▶ Provide a large shallow pan such as a litter tray or wading pool filled with clean soil or sand for dust bathing.
- ▶ Ensure your chicken yard is constructed of lead-free materials.



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