

# Chicken Tail Posture & Body Angle Guide

Clinical musculoskeletal and abdominal pain indicators in backyard poultry

## TAIL ANGLE REVEALS ABDOMINAL PRESSURE & SPINAL COMFORT

A tucked or dropped tail is an involuntary reflex to internal pain, egg binding, or peritonitis.

### 1. High & Alert Tail Angle (+45° Upright)

HEALTHY / VIGOROUS

|               |                                                                                        |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| POSTURE:      | Tail feathers held high at a crisp 45° to 60° angle. Head held erect, eyes bright.     |
| DIAGNOSIS:    | Normal active flock baseline. Indicates unimpeded abdominal cavity and spinal comfort. |
| ACTION STEPS: | Record as flock baseline. Normal foraging and social flock behavior.                   |

### 2. Horizontal Tail Posture (0° Level)

RELAXED / DUSTING

|               |                                                                                          |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| POSTURE:      | Tail feathers aligned horizontally with the spine. Body relaxed, head level.             |
| DIAGNOSIS:    | Common during resting on roosts, dust bathing, or mild cold-weather heat retention.      |
| ACTION STEPS: | Ensure bird perks tail up when moving or responding to feed call. Monitor if stationary. |

### 3. Tucked / Drooped Tail (-30° Downward)

ABDOMINAL DISTRESS

|               |                                                                                                    |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| POSTURE:      | Tail feathers clamped downward between hocks. Back arched or hunched, wings slightly dropped.      |
| DIAGNOSIS:    | Clear pain signal: acute Egg Binding, Vent Gleet, reproductive peritonitis, or severe crop stasis. |
| ACTION STEPS: | <b>Gently palpate abdomen between pubic bones. Check vent for rhythmic straining or egg bulge.</b> |

### 4. Upright 'Penguin' Stance (Vertical Torso)

ACUTE EMERGENCY

|               |                                                                                                    |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| POSTURE:      | Bird stands upright like a penguin. Swollen, heavy, fluid-filled lower abdomen dragging.           |
| DIAGNOSIS:    | Classic indicator of Ascites (water belly), severe egg peritonitis, or impacted oviduct.           |
| ACTION STEPS: | <b>Do not squeeze abdomen. Keep bird calm, warm, and transport to an avian clinic immediately.</b> |

## WHEN TAIL POSTURE SIGNALS AN EMERGENCY

- Tail is pumping up and down rapidly in rhythm with labored breathing (acute oviduct distress)
- Tail held down while hen strains in nesting box for over 45 minutes without producing an egg
- Abdomen feels like an overfilled water balloon between pelvic points (severe Ascites / peritonitis)
- Hen is unable to support her weight and falls backward onto her tail feathers (spinal compression)