

DUST BATHS

Chickens love to make a little burrow for themselves in the dirt and roll in it. When observing a chicken taking a dust bath, you may think they're having a seizure. They flop around with their eyes closed and make strange little sounds, but if you watch for a while longer you'll see how much fun they're really having. Free-range hens love to dig down into damper dirt and throw warm, damp soil all over them.

What is a dust bath?

A dust bath is a ritual done throughout the day by your chickens. They'll scratch out a little, shallow burrow, and nestle into it. They'll throw dirt over themselves, flop around and ruffle their feathers to get the dirt deep down near their skin. Your birds will find the best warm spots in the yard, settle down for a bath and when they're all done they'll stand up and shake all the dirt off in a little cloud before wandering away.

Why do they take dust baths?

Chickens instinctively take these baths and historically it has been done to kill off parasites that would be hanging onto the skin. Good poultry owners now dust for these same parasites, but the dirt from a dust bath would clog the breathing means of the parasites and kill them off. Then when the chickens stood, they parasites would fall off with the dirt when they shook themselves out.

Isn't a Chicken Getting Dirty When Taking a Dust Bath?

Despite how ironic this seems, dust baths help make healthy and happy hens. Dust baths remove dander, feather flakes and excess oil from their skin, which encourages preening. Preening causes the oils from the glands to spread back across the feathers which keeps them both waterproof and in good condition.

Dust baths also help the chicken smother any mites, lice or fleas.

Dust bathing makes for happy hens.

Go out and watch them while they're rolling in the dirt. Listen to the sounds they'll make. These are happy, contented birds. They love to settle into the dirt and enjoy the sunshine. The sounds they'll make during a dust bath you will never hear any other time!

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