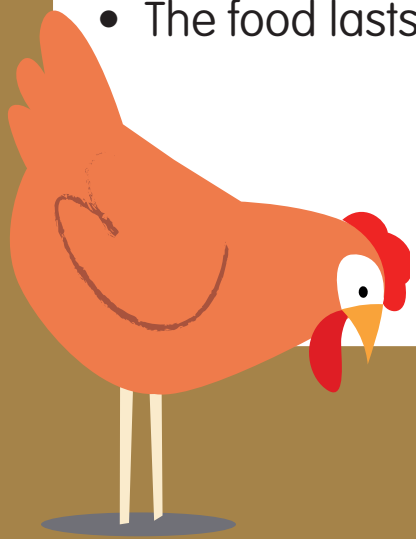
Happy hens

Activity 1: Hen feeders

This photograph shows a hanging feeder for hens:

Features of a good hen feeder:

- Hens can feed when they want to;
- Hens cannot walk on the food;
- The food is kept off the ground;
- It is easy to top up the hen feeder with food; and
- The food lasts the hens at least a day.



How to make a model hen feeder

Cut the end of a kitchen roll tube with three deep V-shaped cuts.

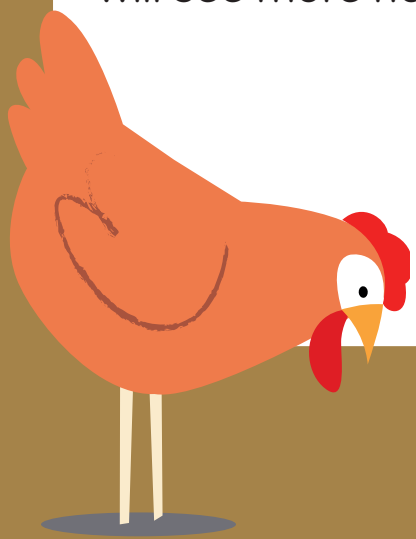
Bend over the ends of the kitchen roll. Cut the bottom off a cream or yoghurt pot. Glue the kitchen roll to the pot with a glue gun.

Fill the tube with rice. If you want, you can pierce the tube at the top and hang it up with a cocktail stick and a piece of string.

Please note that hens should not be fed uncooked rice as it swells up in their stomachs. We have used rice here to model the pellets often used to feed hens.

Testing your model hen feeder

You can test the feeder by moving rice away from the slots. You will see more rice come out to take its place.

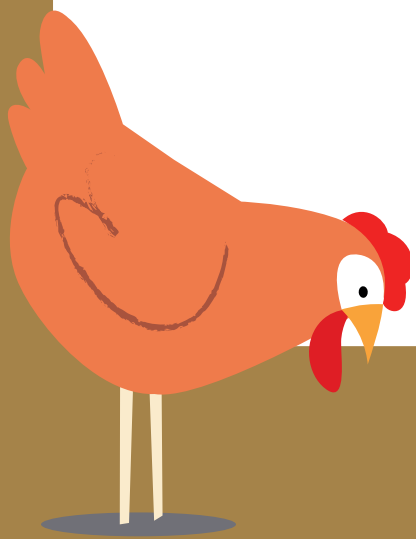


Activity 2: Water dispensers

Water dispensers are designed to refill the drinking tray when the hen's drink some water. Its much easier to fill a large container every couple of days instead of filling small water trays two or three times a day.

A good water dispenser:

- Automatically fills a drinking tray;
- Is easy to refill;
- Stops hens from spoiling the water; and
- Holds enough water to last more than a day.



How to make a model water dispenser

Step 1

Fill a tumbler full of water and place a shallow dish over the top.

Step 2

Carefully turn the tumbler and shallow dish upside down. A little water may weep into the dish.

Step 3

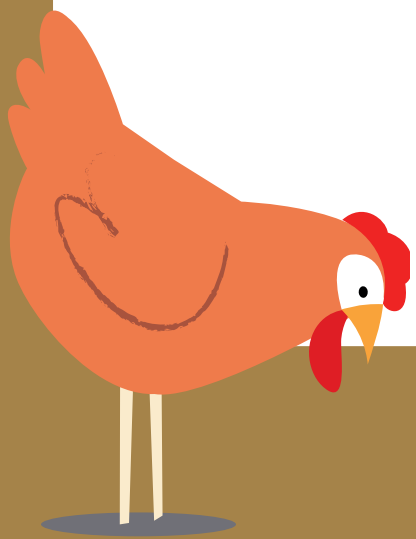
Carefully tilt the tumbler a little so you can put a support under the rim. Some water will come out!

Step 4

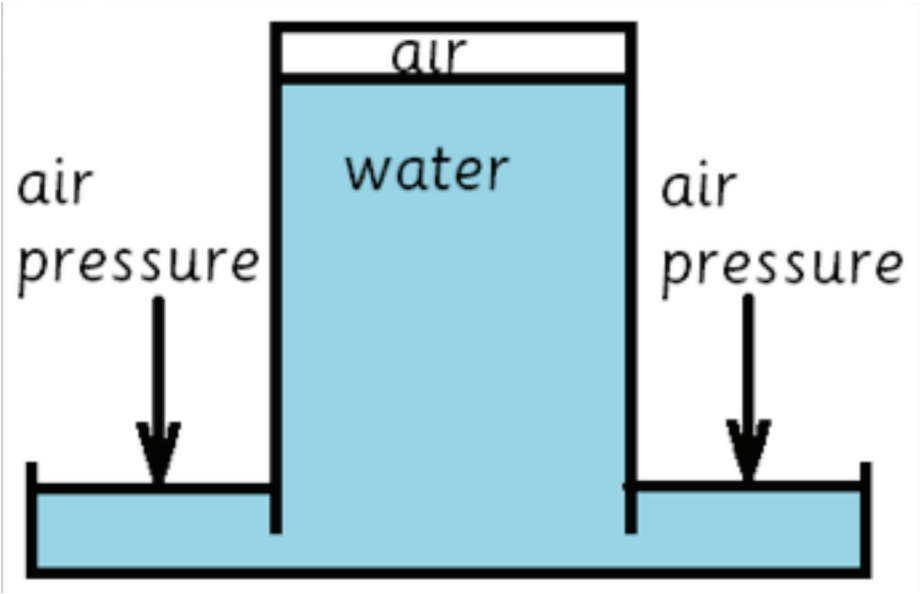
Carefully tilt the tumbler again to put two more supports under the rim.

Testing your water dispenser:

Use a dropping pipette to take water out of the shallow dish. When you have taken enough water out, you will see a bubble of air rise through the water and the dish will refill.



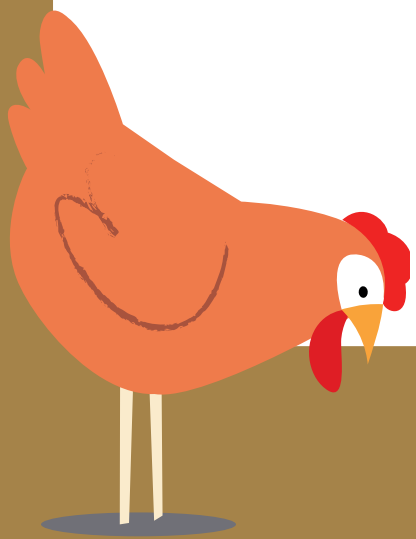
The science explained:



The water dispenser works using air pressure.

Air pressure pushes down on the surface of the water in the dish.

The air pressure keeps the water in the tumbler.

Water cannot come put of the tumbler unless air takes its place.

You can test this by blowing air into the tumbler through a drinking straw.