

# Chicken Guardians: Keeping Your Flock Safe and Happy

## Lesson Overview

In this lesson, learners will discover the "Big Three" requirements for healthy chickens and master the art of coop security. By the end, students will be able to think like a "Chicken Bodyguard" to protect their flock from ground and aerial threats.

## Learning Objectives

- **Identify** the three essential needs for chicken health: clean water, nutritious food, and safe shelter.
- **Categorize** common predators into "Ground Raiders" and "Sky Divers."
- **Design** a predator-proofing plan for a chicken coop using hardware cloth, digging barriers, and overhead protection.

## Materials Needed

- Cardboard box (to represent a chicken coop)
- Pipe cleaners or "Hardware Cloth" (small-grid wire mesh or tulle)
- Masking tape and scissors
- A small container of water and some "chicken feed" (dried corn, beans, or beads)
- Predator Profile Cards (Pictures or names of: Fox, Raccoon, Hawk, Owl, Snake, Weasel)
- Printed "Safety Inspection" checklist

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## 1. Introduction: The Chicken Bodyguard (Hook)

**The Scenario:** Imagine you are a chicken. You are small, you are tasty, and you aren't very fast at flying away. To the rest of the world, you are basically a "walking chicken nugget." If you were a chicken, what would make you feel like the king or queen of the backyard?

**The Mission:** Today, you aren't just a student; you are a Chicken Bodyguard. Your job is to ensure your flock stays healthy and—most importantly—safe from the sneaky predators that want to crash the coop party.

## 2. The "Big Three" of Chicken Health (I Do)

To have happy hens, we must provide the "Big Three." Without these, chickens get stressed and sick.

- **1. Clean Water:** Chickens drink a lot! If the water is poopy or slimy, they won't drink enough. Clean water must be available 24/7.  
*Bodyguard Tip:* Elevate the waterer so they don't kick dirt into it!

- **2. Nutritious Food:** Chickens need a balance of protein (for feathers and eggs) and calcium (for strong shells).  
*Bodyguard Tip:* Store food in metal cans so mice don't steal it!
- **3. Safe Shelter:** A coop isn't just a house; it's a fortress. It needs to keep them dry and out of the wind.

### 3. Know Your Enemy: Ground vs. Air (We Do)

Let's look at our "Predator Profile Cards." As a group, let's decide how these "villains" try to get into the coop:

- **Ground Raiders (Foxes, Coyotes, Dogs, Raccoons):** These guys are diggers and climbers. Raccoons even have "hand-like" paws that can turn latches!
- **The Squeezers (Weasels, Snakes):** If a mouse can fit through a hole, a weasel can too. They look for any gap larger than 1 inch.
- **Sky Divers (Hawks, Owls):** These predators strike from above, especially when chickens are out in their "run" (the fenced outdoor area).

**Discussion:** "If you were a fox, would you try to go under the fence or over it? If you were a hawk, where would you wait?"

### 4. Hands-On Activity: Fortify the Flock (You Do)

Now it's time to build your defenses using your cardboard coop model!

1. **The Floor Defense:** Predators love to dig. Use your tape and cardboard to create an "apron" (a flat piece of wire that sits on the ground around the coop) or bury your fence 12 inches deep.
2. **The Window Defense:** Use the pipe cleaners or mesh to cover any openings. *Bodyguard Rule:* Standard "Chicken Wire" is actually bad for chickens—it keeps chickens in, but predators can rip it open. We use "Hardware Cloth" (small squares) because it's much tougher!
3. **The Roof Defense:** Use your mesh or a solid lid to cover the top of the "run." This stops the Sky Divers from zooming in.
4. **The Latch Check:** Can a raccoon open it? Simple sliding bolts are easy for them. Use a carabiner or a spring-loaded latch that requires "thumbs" and logic to open!

### 5. Conclusion: The Final Inspection

**Recap:** What are the three things every chicken needs? (Clean water, food, safe shelter). What is the difference between chicken wire and hardware cloth?

**Success Criteria:** Look at your model. Ask yourself:

- Can a fox dig under?
- Can a hawk fly in?
- Can a raccoon open the door?

If you answered "No" to all three, your flock is safe! Well done, Chicken Bodyguard.

## Assessment

- **Formative:** During the "We Do" section, can the student correctly identify which predators come from the sky versus the ground?
- **Summative:** The student must complete the "Safety Inspection Checklist" for their model coop, explaining one specific feature they added to stop a "Ground Raider" and one for a "Sky Diver."

## Differentiation & Adaptations

- **For Younger/Struggling Learners:** Focus only on one predator (the Fox) and build one defense for it. Use "Yes/No" picture cards for the Big Three needs.
- **For Advanced Learners/Older Students:** Research the "Nutritional Analysis" of chicken feed. Ask them to calculate the cost of "Hardware Cloth" versus "Chicken Wire" for a 10x10 foot run to see the investment in safety.
- **Multi-Sensory:** Take the lesson outside! If you have a real yard, look for "predator paths" (holes under fences or low-hanging branches where hawks might sit).