**YVCipedia POULTRY**

Peafowl Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

Peafowl, known for their extravagant tail feathers and haunting vocalizations, are members of the pheasant family and originate from the Indian subcontinent. At YVC, we find them to be hardy, intelligent birds with strong territorial instincts, best suited for experienced keepers or large outdoor properties.

The term "peafowl" includes both **peacocks** (males) and **peahens** (females). These birds are long-lived—often reaching 15 to 20 years—and require ample space, secure fencing, and seasonal care to thrive in captivity. While they’re often admired for their beauty, peafowl are more than ornamental: they are active, curious, and social animals with distinct personalities and complex needs.

## **Housing & Environment**

Peafowl are semi-domesticated and not well-suited to small backyards. They need generous space to roam, strong roosts for safety, and protection from predators—particularly at night. Without proper fencing or shelter, they will wander extensively and may choose to roost in high trees.

We recommend housing peafowl in **a secure, predator-proof aviary or run** with access to open ground. Shelters should include:

* Elevated roosting areas (4–6 feet high)
* Covered areas to escape rain, snow, and direct sun
* A floor plan that allows at least **80–100 square feet per bird**, especially during mating season when territorial behaviors increase

Because peafowl are highly vocal—particularly the males during breeding season—be aware of potential noise concerns if you have close neighbors.

## **Diet & Nutrition**

Peafowl are omnivores with a natural inclination toward foraging. In the wild, they consume grains, insects, berries, and small reptiles. Captive birds need a balanced base diet along with access to forage to stay healthy and active.

At YVC, we recommend the following breakdown:

* **60–70%** high-quality gamebird or turkey pellets (16–20% protein)
* **20–30%** whole grains like cracked corn, oats, and wheat
* **10–20%** greens, vegetables (e.g., leafy greens, broccoli, squash), and occasional fruits (e.g., berries, apple slices)

During breeding or molting season, protein requirements may increase slightly. Fresh water must be available at all times, and feed should be stored to prevent mold and contamination.

We also suggest offering grit and oyster shell free-choice, especially for laying hens.

## **Behavior & Handling**

Peafowl are naturally wary and typically don’t enjoy close handling. However, birds raised from chicks or those kept in regular contact with people can become more accustomed to human presence. They are highly intelligent, observant, and capable of learning routines or responding to consistent care.

They are best kept in small flocks or pairs. Males, particularly during the breeding season, can become territorial and aggressive toward other males or even unfamiliar animals. Peahens tend to be more even-tempered.

Daily handling is not necessary, but familiarity with their normal movement and calls can help identify any changes that might suggest stress or illness.

## **Enrichment**

At YVC, we encourage all avian caretakers to think beyond food and shelter. Peafowl are curious and benefit from varied environments that allow them to explore and forage. Even in enclosed areas, rotating natural elements—like logs, rocks, or scattered grain—can stimulate healthy behavior.

They enjoy:

* Scratching and pecking through leaf piles or straw
* Access to dust baths for feather care
* Open visual lines to observe surroundings (important for their natural vigilance)

Because they roam widely in the wild, visual barriers or cramped enclosures can frustrate peafowl and lead to pacing or escape attempts.

## **Health & Veterinary Care**

Peafowl are generally hardy but prone to certain issues if diet, housing, or hygiene is suboptimal. Respiratory diseases, internal parasites, and injuries from rough surfaces or aggressive flock mates are among the most common concerns we see.

At YVC, we recommend:

* **Annual wellness exams and fecal parasite testing** for at least one bird from the flock
* Occasional blood panels in older or symptomatic birds
* Monitoring weight, feather condition, and droppings for subtle changes

Common health issues include:

* **Blackhead disease (Histomoniasis)**—especially if housed near chickens or turkeys
* **Worm infestations**, especially in free-ranging birds
* **Respiratory infections** in poorly ventilated shelters
* **Foot injuries** or bumblefoot from damp, dirty flooring

Preventative care and early detection go a long way. Always isolate new or returning birds for at least 30 days before adding them to an existing flock.

## **Facts & FAQs**

* A peacock’s full tail (train) doesn't appear until around 3 years of age
* Peafowl molt their train annually—this is normal and not a sign of illness
* They can fly short distances and often roost in trees if not contained
* Their calls can carry up to a mile and increase during the spring
* Peafowl are monogamous or polygynous depending on the environment and flock composition

## **Supplies Checklist**

* Secure shelter or aviary with elevated roosts
* Gamebird or turkey feed (16–20% protein)
* Whole grains and chopped produce
* Free-choice grit and oyster shell
* Clean food and water containers
* Fencing tall enough to prevent flight escape
* Bedding that stays dry (straw, sand, pine shavings)
* Dust bathing area
* Travel crate for medical transport or isolation
* Net or soft catch pole for safe handling if needed

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*