

# Another dead chicken

*by* Ed Higgins

in the chicken house

this morning. The second  
one this week. I carry the stiff hen  
out to the back pasture for the coyotes,  
since fall is coming on. In spring  
and summer I'm happier treating turkey vultures.  
Several of my hens are old--and chickens of course  
are not ordained for long lives. Commercial hens  
lay themselves out in one to three years.  
After their laying slows with these battery chickens  
it's off to the slaughter house and chicken soup—  
or other worn-out laying hen products.  
My uncaged hens can last 6 or 7 years,  
depending on the breed. Rarely, a barnyard chicken  
can reach 12-15 years. Because I am old myself,  
far beyond any chicken years, I am not indifferent  
to how my hens slip into eternity. So I do not early-cull  
my layers when they slow down, or stop laying altogether.  
This hen I am carrying to the back field has her dignity  
still intact, if no longer her well-being.

