

Functional Assessment & Intervention Design of Miss Love Bloom Chicken's Vocalizing-at-Door Behaviour

by

Wendy Bergen, LLA 2105

Distant Antecedents

Miss Love Bloom is a 2-year old chicken who is the last remaining chicken from a free ranging flock of hand raised chickens. She currently roosts and eats in a covered alcove area at the back door after an incident of foxes killing the rest of the flock and injuring her in the chicken coop approximately 6 months previously. Miss Love Bloom has fully recovered from her injuries.

Setting events:

Covered area at house back door. Home office on other side of door.

Motivating operation:

The chicken is fed at the covered area at the house back door. The feeding regime is preceded by someone walking out the back door. The chicken is always fed in the morning but can sometime get further treats during the day depending on who is home. The chicken has come to associate a person walking out the back door with receiving food.

Immediate Antecedent:

A person talking inside the office (eg on the phone)

Behaviour:

Miss Love Bloom vocalises loudly at the back door feeding station

Consequence:

Person talking in the office walks outside.

Replacement Behaviour:

Vocalising loudly at the back door feeding station can be replaced with food foraging in the back yard.

Desired Behaviours:

Miss Love Bloom will go to a new feed station (away from the back door) to receive her morning meal.

Miss Love Bloom will display foraging behaviour through the day.

Previous strategies tried:

Throwing things at the chicken from the door. Walking away to another part of the house to talk on the phone. Ignoring the behaviour.

Preliminary Strategies:

Create a new feed station away from the back door for the chicken.

Provide favoured pelleted food only at the new feed station.

Walk out the side door (away from the office back door) only when feeding the chicken.

Provide favoured pelleted food at one time of the day only.

Ignore the behaviour of vocalising at the back door.

Encourage foraging behaviour.

Training Strategies:

1. Feed station: training provided by primary carer of chicken in the mornings only. New feed station will be located away from back door and preferably out of sight of back door and sound of people in the office. The training will take place every morning.
2. Ignoring vocalising at the back door: this behaviour is to be ignored by all in the household
3. Encouraging foraging behaviour: encouraging foraging can be done by all members of the family whenever the chicken is not at the back door. Provide an alternative favoured food such as mealy worms scattered into the back yard at opportune times through the day when the chicken is already foraging for food. This can be done 2 or 3 times a day and can potentially be done discreetly via an automated system which drops mealworms in a favoured foraging area under a tree in the back yard
4. Foraging behaviour can also be encouraged by providing some of the usual vegetable scraps (particularly green) spread around in the foraging area instead of in a bowl near the back door.
5. Any physical attention that the chicken enjoys will be provided in the foraging area and may include treats such as mealy worms or greens.

Reinforcement Procedures:

- Potential reinforcers include favoured pelleted food, mealy worms (another favoured food item), greens and even simple attention.
- Preferably favoured pelleted food is only to come from mother and daughter (the main carers of the chicken). They will feed the chicken the preferred pellets in the new feed station every morning only.
- Husband will provide the foraging activity encouragement through out the day as he works from the home office and can visualise the chicken foraging from the office window and so set off the automated mealy worm delivery system.

Reduction Procedures:

- No one (but particularly the husband who is most affected by the noise of the chicken) is to provide food for the chicken from the office back door.

- No one is to go out the office back door when the chicken is vocalising loudly at the back door (alternative doors to outside can be used).

Implementation Details:

- To work effectively the extinction of the vocalising behaviour at the back door must be an integral part of this plan. It is vitally important for this door not to be used potentially any time the chicken is near the door whilst the chicken is being trained to the new routine. This is feasible as there are two alternative doors leading to outside.
- It is also important that the chicken is not treated at all at the back door even if a person is walking from outside to inside. Eg daughter coming home from school whom often given the chicken a treat and pat when she gets to the back door.
- Any encouragements should be aimed at foraging behaviour or the morning feeding station only.
- Mealy worm dispensing area. A small container hung in a tree above the current favoured foraging area. The container has a hole in it such that occasional mealy worms will fall out of the container with normal movement of the worms themselves. The worms can be made to fall out more often via a rope attached to the container which goes to a window at the office such that if the rope is pulled, more mealy worms will fall out of the container. The container is to be filled on a daily basis.

Tracking Changes:

1. Time the number and length of vocalisation at the back door
2. Time the number and length of visualised foraging behaviours in the back yard
3. Record when the chicken voluntarily goes to the new feeding station in the mornings.

Evaluating outcomes:

- Establishment of alternative feeding station is considered successful, with Miss Love Bloom choosing to go to the feeding station and wait as soon as she sees the trainer in the mornings on most occasions.
- Vocalising behaviour currently has not changed in number of times through the day but has reduced in duration of each individual vocalising.
- Foraging behaviour has increased in both number and duration through the day

Current problems Recognised:

- The husband will sometimes try and instigate foraging behaviour when the chicken is vocalising at the door by knocking mealworms into the foraging area when she is vocalising at the door. This may in fact be what is causing the vocalising behaviour to be maintained. This is currently being remedied.

Functional Assessment of Miss Love Bloom

Event Recording Form:

Trainer:

Bergen Family

Behaviour Definition:

Moving to feeding station prior to being fed in the mornings

Date:

Time Period of Observation:

Date	Yes/no
Nov 15/	N
2/11	N
3/11	N
4/11	Y
5/11	N
6/11	Y
7/11	Y
8/11	Y
9/11	Y
10/11	Y
11/11	Y
12/11	N
13/11	Y
14/11	Y
15/11	Y
16/11	

Functional Assessment of Miss Love Bloom

Event Recording Form:

Trainer:

Bergen Family

Behaviour Definition:

Vocalising at back door, foraging behaviour

Date:

Time Period of Observation: = 9am -> 3pm

Date	Vocalising behaviour	Voc count	Foraging behaviour	For count
Nov 1	### 1		1	
2/11	///		1	
3/11	### //		//	
4/11	### //		1	
5/11				
6/11	###		//	
7/11	###		//	
8/11	//		//	
9/11	###		///	
10/11	### ///		//	
11/11	///		###	
12/11	///		///	
13/11	//		///	
14/11	### //		//	
15/11	###		###	
16/11				