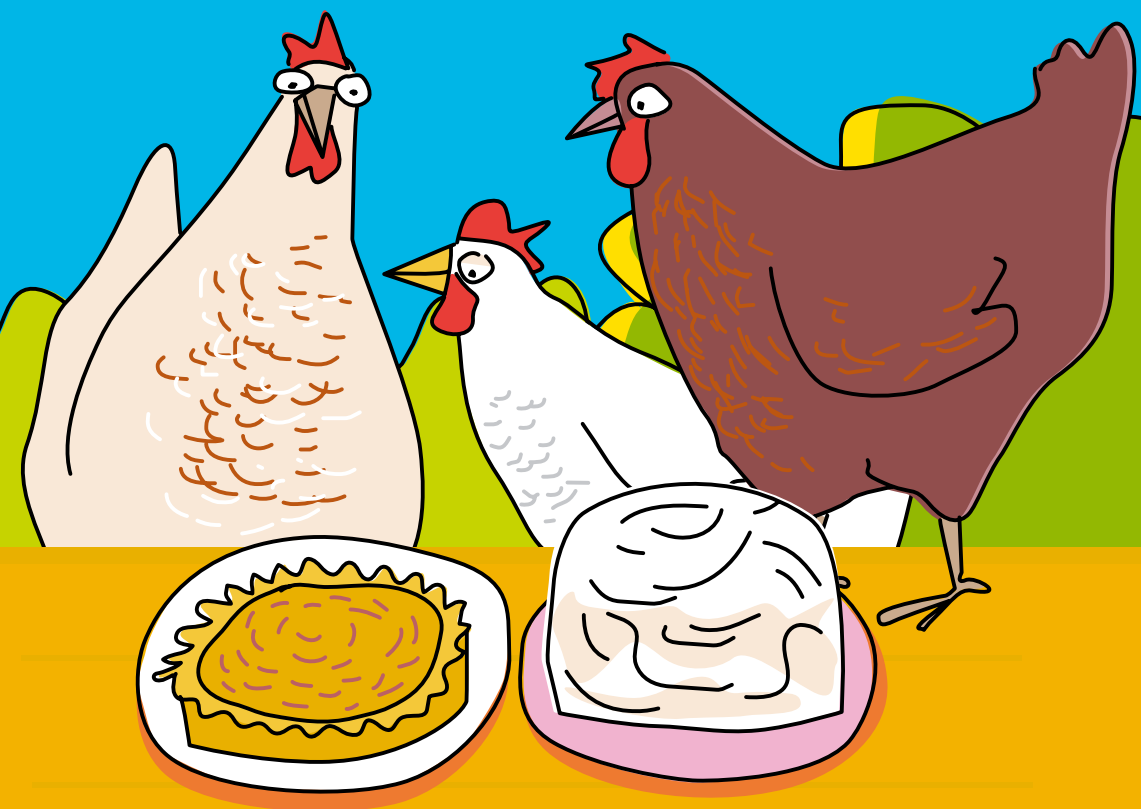


Pumpkin Pie and Pavlova

Story by John Carr

Illustrations by Astrid Matijasevic



Pumpkin Pie and Pavlova

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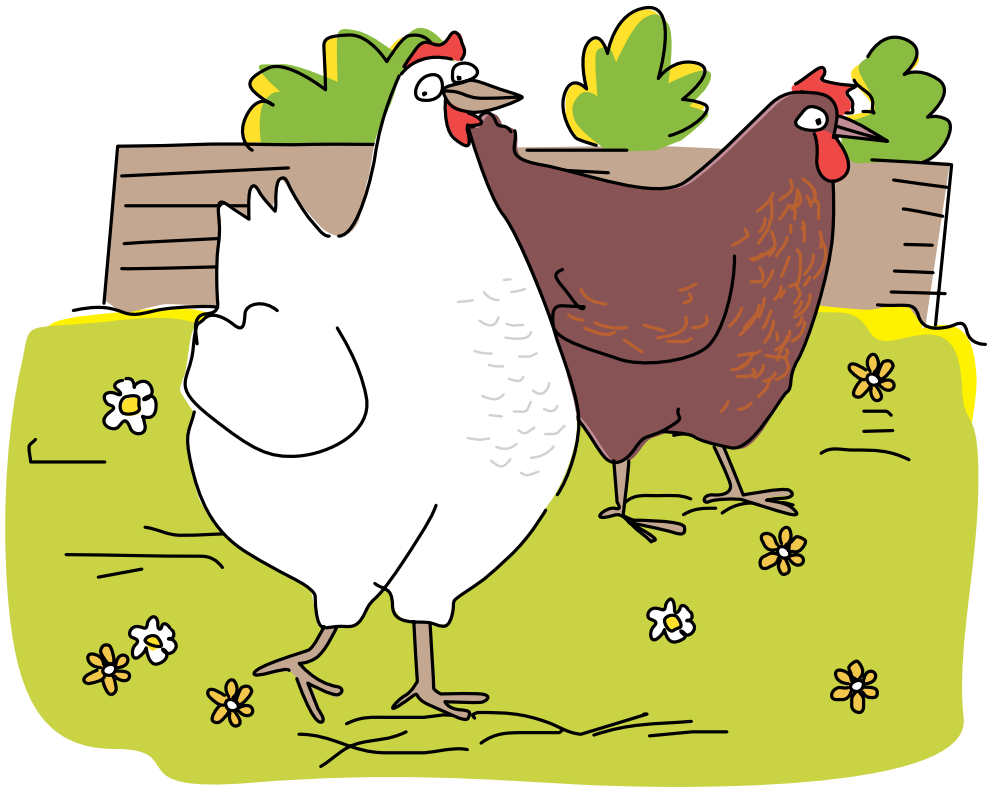
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Pumpkin Pie and Pavlova



Mrs Melling loved pumpkin pies, pavlovas, peace and quiet.

She worked in a quiet, peaceful library and lived in a quiet, peaceful street. She had a garden where she grew pumpkins and a kitchen where she made pumpkin pies and pavlovas.

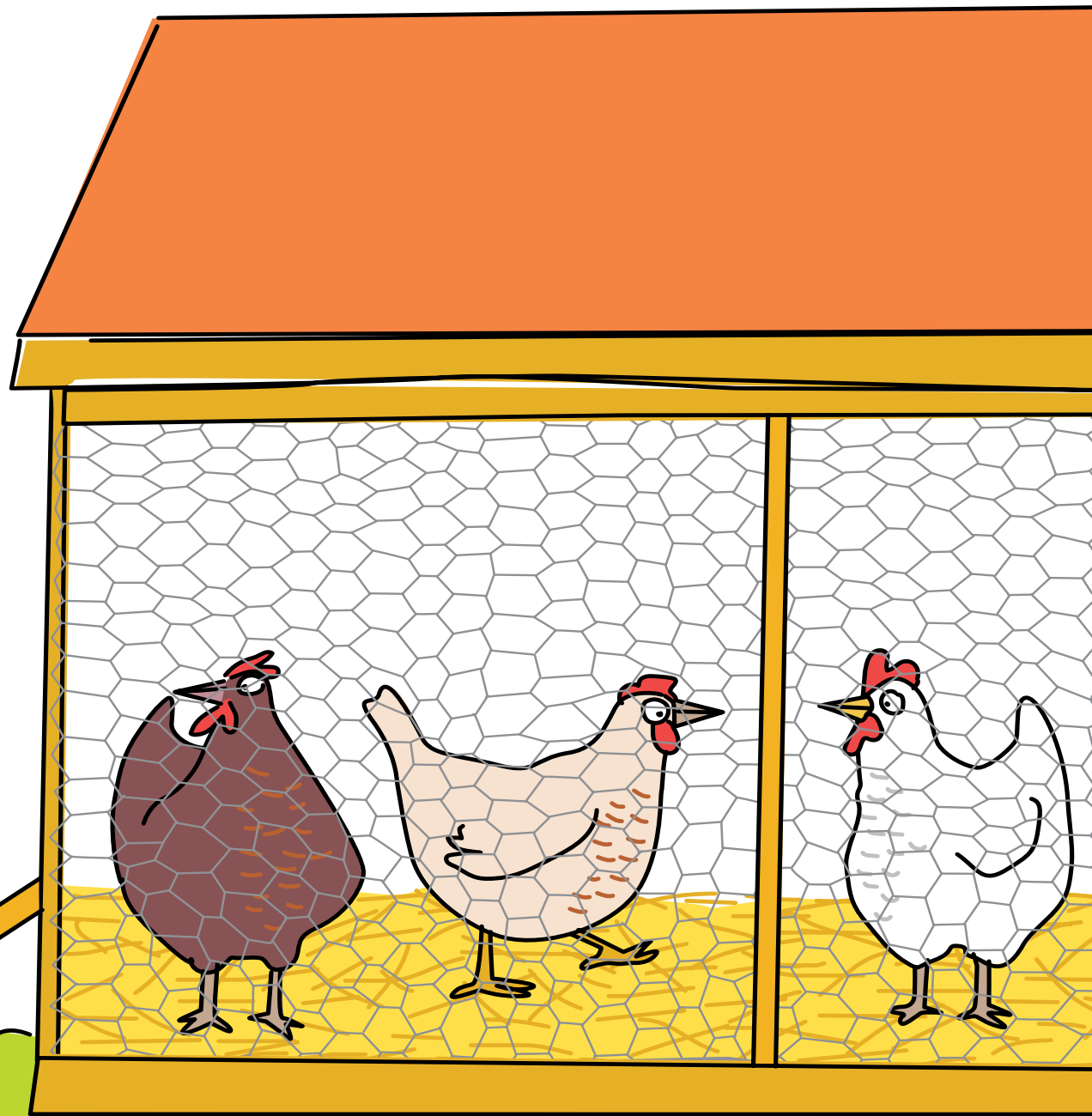
Mrs Melling was very happy until Mr Watkins moved next door.



Mr Watkins loved hens. He had three of them in a coop in his back yard. Their names were Daisy, Maisy and Crazy. He thought they were the happiest and most beautiful hens in the world, but they hadn't always been like that.

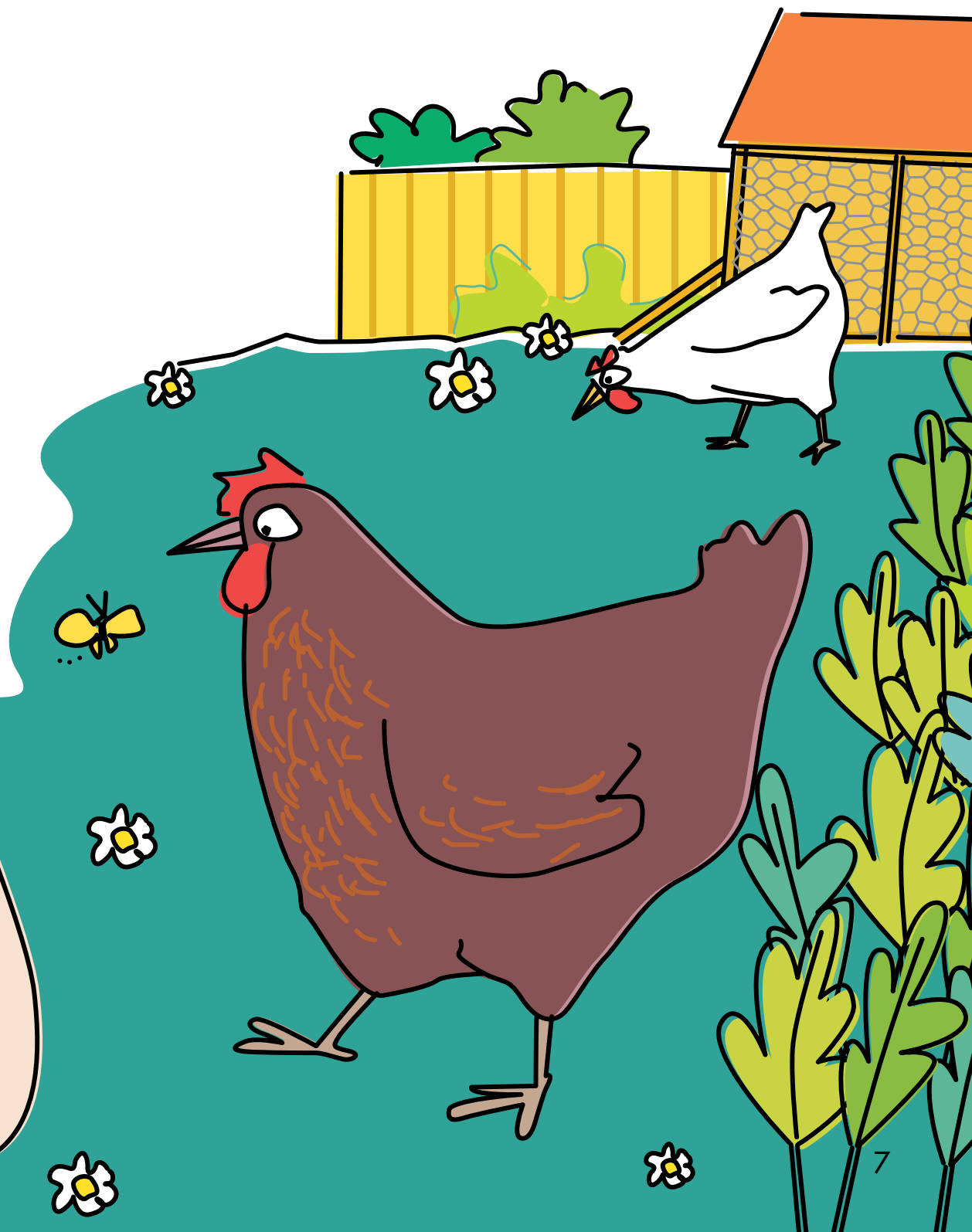
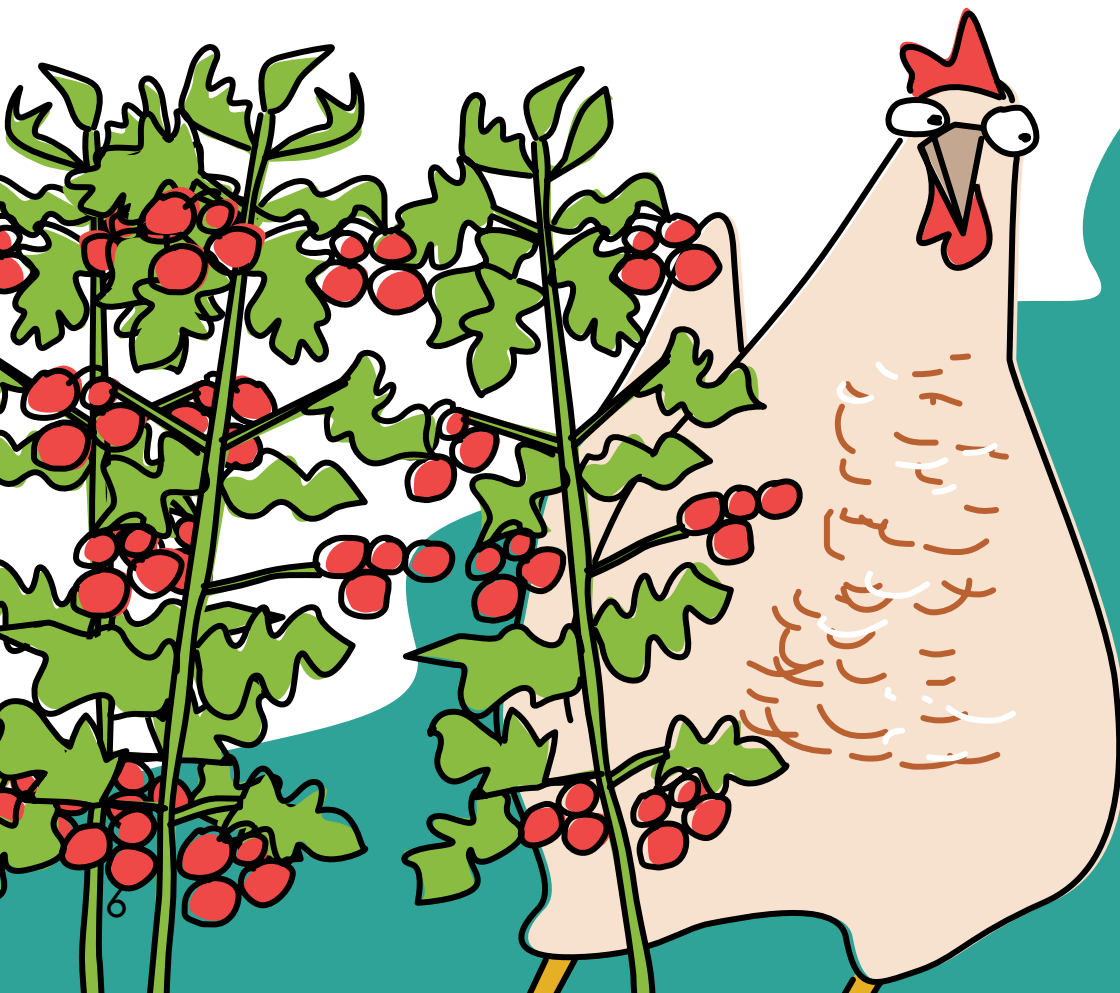
Mr Watkins' hens had been rescued from a cage farm. The hens spent the first year of their lives locked in small cages. They had to lay eggs every day. They never went outside to walk around, to scrape the ground for food, bathe in dust or do any of the things that free hens normally do.

Mr Watkins adopted the hens when he discovered that they needed a good home. He built them a comfortable, safe coop. He collected their eggs. He fed them well and looked after them.



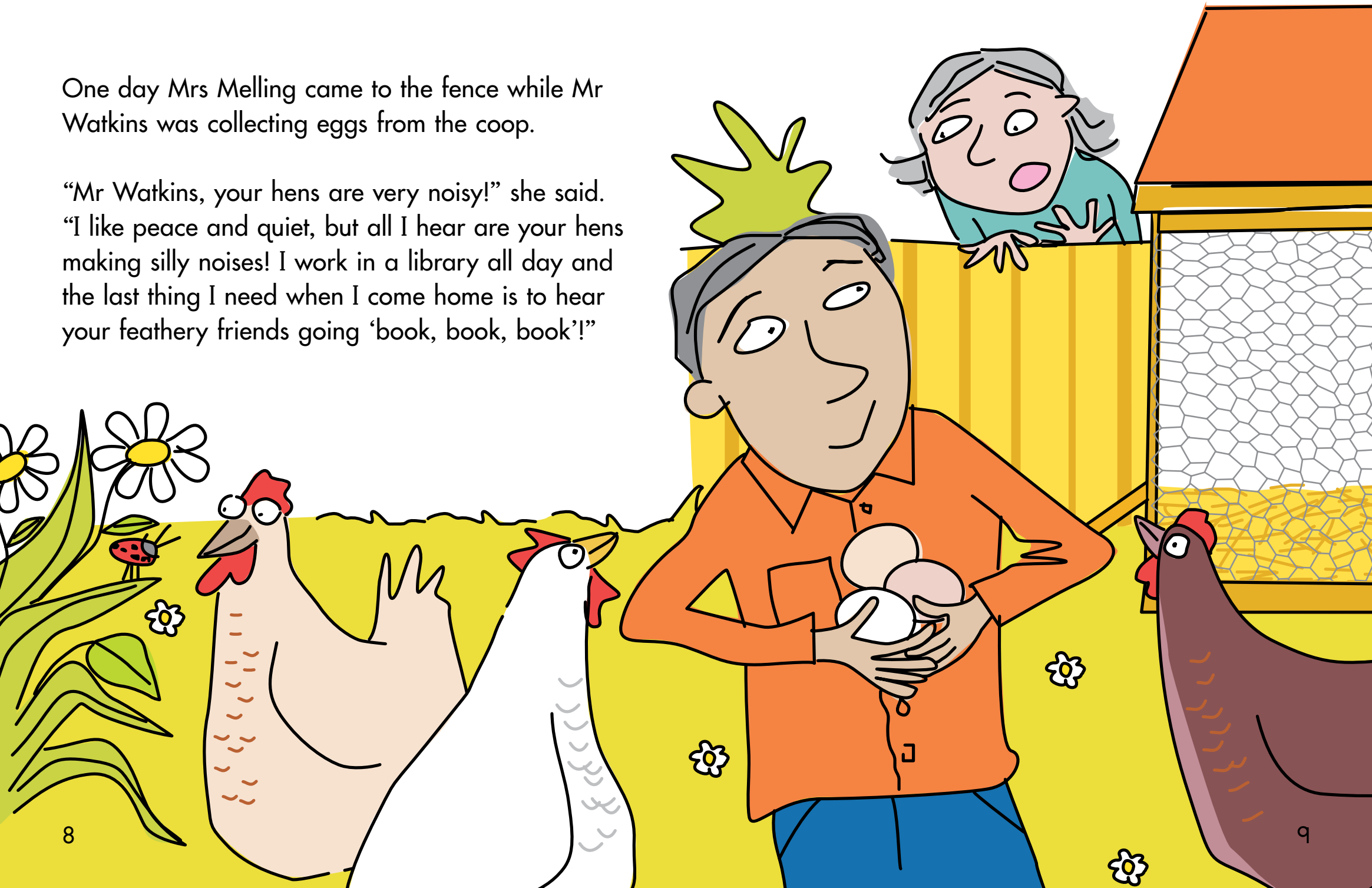
Sometimes Mr Watkins let his hens out of the coop so they could have fun in his flower garden.

Like his hens, Mr Watkins was very happy until he moved next door to Mrs Melling.



One day Mrs Melling came to the fence while Mr Watkins was collecting eggs from the coop.

“Mr Watkins, your hens are very noisy!” she said.
“I like peace and quiet, but all I hear are your hens making silly noises! I work in a library all day and the last thing I need when I come home is to hear your feathery friends going ‘book, book, book’!”



Mr Watkins said he was sorry but that didn't stop Mrs Melling.

"Even when I am in the kitchen baking pavlova, 'book book book' is all I hear!"

Mr Watkins smiled his friendliest smile.

"My hens can help you make even better pavlovas."

"Hens make better pavlovas?" said Mrs Melling.
"Ha! That's crazy!"

"Not just Crazy," laughed Mr Watkins, "but Daisy and Maisy as well."



A tiny smile nearly escaped from Mrs Melling's lips as Mr Watkins handed her the eggs.

"Try them!" he said. "Fresh eggs from happy hens always make the best pavlovas."

"Thank you," said Mrs Melling, keeping the smile trapped tightly inside her mouth until she was back in her kitchen.



The next day Mrs Melling was weeding her pumpkin patch when Mr Watkins came to collect his eggs.

“Mr Watkins,” she called over the fence, “your hens **did** help me make the best pavlova ever but they still make too much noise.”

“Sorry,” said Mr Watkins.

But that didn’t stop Mrs Melling.

“Look at my pumpkins,” she said. “They are not growing well because, like me, they need peace and quiet and your hens are too noisy!”



Mr Watkins smiled his friendliest smile.

“If you want, my hens could help you grow the best pumpkins in the world.”

“Hens grow pumpkins!” scoffed Mrs Melling.
“Ha! That’s crazy!”

“Not just Crazy,” laughed Mr Watkins, “but Daisy and Maisy as well.”

Mrs Melling didn’t laugh. She’d heard that joke before.

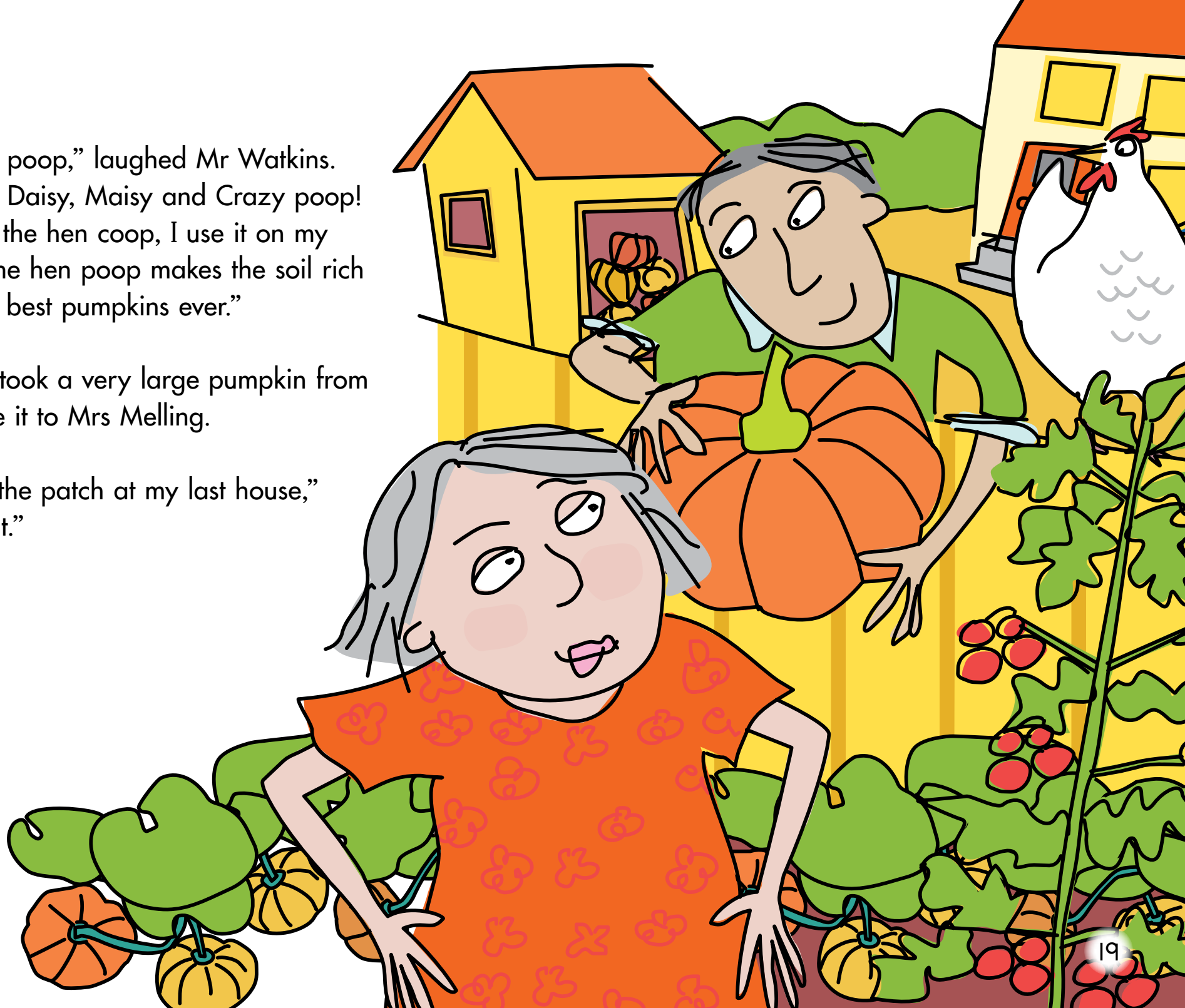
“How can hens grow pumpkins?” she said.
“What are you talking about?”



“I’m talking about poop,” laughed Mr Watkins.
“I’m talking about Daisy, Maisy and Crazy poop!
When I clean out the hen coop, I use it on my
pumpkin patch. The hen poop makes the soil rich
so that I grow the best pumpkins ever.”

Then Mr Watkins took a very large pumpkin from
his shed and gave it to Mrs Melling.

“Here’s one from the patch at my last house,”
he said. “Try it out.”



Mrs Melling was impressed, especially after she tasted her best pumpkin pie ever.

The next time Mrs Melling talked to Mr Watkins over the fence she didn't complain about his hens. She asked him how she could get some hens of her own.

"But I thought you liked peace and quiet?" asked Mr Watkins.

"I do," said Mrs Melling, "but not as much as pumpkin pies and pavlovas."



Mr Watkins knew exactly where to get some hens for Mrs Melling. But first she needed a coop. He helped her build a coop in return for a pumpkin pie and a pavlova.

When the coop was finished, Mrs Melling brought the best pavlova and the best pumpkin pie in the world over to share with Mr Watkins.

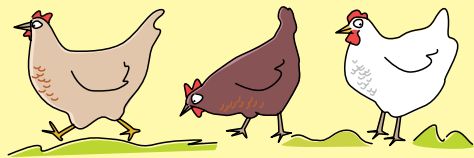
Mr Watkins was sitting on his deck with a smile on his face and a happy-looking hen on his head.

Mrs Melling laughed. "That's crazy!" she said.

"No it's not," said Mr Watkins, "it's Daisy. Crazy is trying out the roosting boxes in your new coop."



Happy Hen Hints



- Hens make great pets.
- Hens usually live for 10 to 15 years, so make sure you are committed to look after them before you get them.
- Have a large coop ready to house your hens before you get them. It should be well ventilated but also provide shade and shelter.
- Make sure each hen has its own nesting box for laying eggs. It should have straw or wood shavings in it.
- Hens like to scratch for food. Straw or wood shavings on the floor of the hen coop are good for this.
- If it is safe, hens like to run around the garden. If you do this, it is better to feed them in the coop in the evening. That way other birds don't eat their food and it is easier to get the hens back into the coop because they will follow the food.
- Hen coops need a quick clean every day and a better clean every week.
- Hens need fresh water every day. The water supply needs to be raised above ground level so the hens don't scrape dirt into it.

Visit kids.spcaeducation.org.nz to learn more about caring for hens