

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.

