

Her pal was heartbroken, so Laura Aguayo, 30, from Bridgnorth, hatched a plan...



Bruce in his new love nest

YOU'VE GOTTA LAUGH!

UN-CLUCKY IN LOVE



Me: mother hen!

The schoolkids gathered round the tiny fluffy chicks and squealed with delight. 'What'll happen to them now, Ms?' one girl, 6, asked wide-eyed.

My heart sank. A primary school teacher, I'd arranged for a local farmer to lend us five fertilised eggs. We'd incubated them in the classroom, watched them hatch and grow. But now, in June 2017, it was time to return them to the farmer.

I didn't know what would happen to them there, but I had my suspicions...

'Probably end up as a roast dinner,' I sighed to my husband Omar, 38.

I'd just discovered I was pregnant, was feeling clucky.

'Maybe we could keep them?' I said.

Omar agreed.

He built a pen in our garden and the chickens - Hettie, Penny, Lucky and Blackie - came home with their male counterpart, a cockerel named Bruce.

We didn't know anything about keeping poultry, so we winged it.

Bruce ruled the roost. 'Cock-a-doodle-doo!' he'd crow every morning.

He was a real gent, digging

up worms and calling the girls over for a feast.

Only, in September 2017, a weasel got into the pen and killed Blackie and Penny. Bruce must've tried to protect them,

as Lucky and Hettie survived.

'It's not safe for them here,' I wept to Omar, heartbroken.

If the weasel came back and killed our girls and Bruce, it'd break my heart - so we decided to re-home them.

Finding good homes for egg-laying Lucky and Hettie was easy. But with Bruce, things were trickier.

Cockerels tend to fight, so you only have one per eight to 10 hens.

I contacted local farmers and zoos, tried everywhere.

No-one wanted him.

Being cooped up without his girls really ruffled Bruce's



Bruce as a chick

feathers. Depressed, he'd mope around the garden.

Instead of his morning 'cock-a-doodle-doo's', he hardly made a sound. Despairing, I

contacted the British Hen Welfare Trust, who save 50,000 hens from slaughter each year.

Incredibly, they said they'd come across many lovelorn cocks like Bruce. So they'd created a lonely hearts page especially for them!

'What an egg-cellent idea,' I cried.

Snapping a pic of Bruce, I paid £3 to post it on the page.

A true gent, but a lonely boy in need of some female company, I wrote.

A week later, I received an e-mail from Caroline, who had a

smallholding in Worcester.

She'd just adopted some hens and wanted a cockerel to keep them company.

In January 2018, a few weeks after giving birth to my little boy Jacob, I met Caroline and tearfully handed Bruce over.

'Take good care of him,' I said.

As I got home, Caroline e-mailed me a photo of Bruce making his grand hen-trance.

He looked so happy surrounded by his new flock of ladies.

I get regular updates, and these days he's totally henpecked.

I'm just chuffed my Bruce is clucky in love once again!

Being cooped up without his girls really ruffled his feathers!

● Find the cockerel lonely hearts at bhwt.org.uk/cockerels.



I'm just cock-a-hoop!

Thanks, Caroline!