



Getting Started With Chickens

Agenda

- Common FAQs
- Equipment Checklist
- Getting Ready
 - Space
 - Heat & Light
 - Food & Water
- Feed
- Parasites

Agenda Continued

- Early Adolescence
- Housing Options
- Seasons
 - Spring
 - Summer
 - Fall & Winter
- Nutrition
- Beginner Breeds

Common FAQ's

Q.
Do I need a rooster to get eggs?

A.
Only if you want baby chicks... hens produce eggs just fine without one

Q.
Are they noisy?

A.
Hens cackle a bit when they lay an egg, but generally your neighbors won't know they are there (a rooster is a different story)

Q.
Do chickens cause rodent problems?

A.
Feed can draw rodents, keep it in a metal trash can

Common FAQ's Continued

Q. Do chickens cause fly problems?

A. Keep the coop reasonably clean and they won't be an issue.

Q. Can I use the manure as fertilizer?

A. Yes – it is best if it is composted for a bit first.

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Common FAQ's Continued

Q. How many chickens should I get?

A. Follow local ordinance, but at least 2 as lone chickens are not happy...probably 3-4 or more.

Q. How many eggs will I get?

A. Hens will start laying at about 5-6 months of age and each one will lay 5-6 eggs per week until they go through molt.

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Project & Equipment Checklist

- ❑ Healthy chicks
- ❑ Brooder & Brooder Guard
- ❑ Litter (bedding material): newspapers sprinkled with pine wood chips
- ❑ Feeder and Waterer – small size for chicks
- ❑ Feed
- ❑ The best thing you can do is avoid small children handling chicks the first couple weeks!



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Getting Ready: *Space*

- Create an area to hold chicks for first 2 weeks
- Objectives:
 - Keep them warm/comfortable
 - Keep them close to feed and water
 - Help them adjust to their new environment
- Approximately 1 sq. ft. per chick



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Getting Ready: *Space*

- Housing options:
 - Wooden/cardboard box
 - Stock tank
 - Brooder guard



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Getting Ready: *Heat & Light*

- Set up lights and start heat lamps 24 hours in advance
- Provide a second lamp in case one burns out
- Recommended temperature is 90 - 95° F at bird level for first week
- Hang lamps 18" - 20" above floor and adjust as necessary



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Getting Ready: *Heat & Light*

Monitoring Temperature



Too high:
Chicks spread around the perimeter of the brooder.
Raise the heat lamp or use lower wattage bulbs



Too low:
Chicks huddled under the heat lamp.
Lower the heat lamp or use higher wattage bulbs



Other issue:
Chicks huddled in one spot on the perimeter.
Investigate for a draft, loud noises, or uneven light distribution



Perfect:
Chicks spread evenly around the brooder.
You'll hear contented peeping sounds

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Getting Ready: *Food & Water*

- One-gallon waterer per 25 chicks to start
- Add electrolytes to the water for 1st couple days
- Provide 1" of feeder space per chick to start
- First 4 - 6 hours – allow chicks to drink before introducing feed
- Feeder and waterer should be the same height as the backs of young birds



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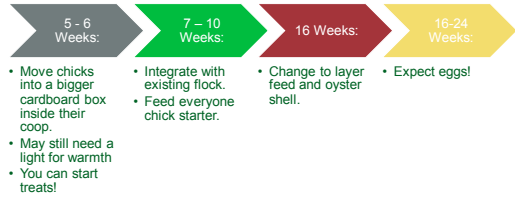
12

Feeding Recommendations

- Scatter some feed on a paper plate the first day to help chicks start eating sooner
- Keep feeders and waterers full
 - **Meat birds: Remove feed for 6-12 hours per day after the first 3 days**
- Keep feeders and waterers clean
- First 6 weeks of life are critical - chicks must have a balanced, high protein chick starter ration



Chicken Timeline



Common Parasites

- Coccidiosis
 - Parasite that thrives in damp conditions
- Symptoms
 - Bloody diarrhea
 - Unthriftiness
 - In some cases - mortality



Common Parasites Continued

- Coccidiosis Prevention
 - Clean, sanitary conditions are the best defense
 - Medicated chick feed can help prevent coccidiosis
 - If vaccinated for cocci (which is not routine practice yet), **do not** feed medicated feed in addition as the feed will offset the vaccination
- Coccidiosis Treatment
 - If not feeding medicated feed and an outbreak occurs: use Amprolium or Sulmet in water



Midspring – Early Adolescence

- At about 5 - 6 weeks, move chicks into a bigger cardboard box - inside their coop
- With existing flock in coop, recommend wire cage so they can see each other and get to know each other
- May still need a light bulb for heat
- Will start exploring their environment

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17

Options for Housing

- Overall allow about 4-square feet per bird
 - Roosts: about 2 feet per chicken
 - Sturdy branch or rounded 2 x 4
 - About 3 feet off ground
 - Nest boxes: 1 per 3 - 4 chickens
- Make sure space is well ventilated
- Chickens will naturally come in to roost at night



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18

Options for Housing

- An adjacent run is good for turnout
- Chicken wire secured underground to protect against burrowing predators
- Netting or wire overhead protects against hawks, falcons or owls
- Tarp for shade
- Safely gives birds an opportunity to eat bugs
- Free range or pastured poultry are another option but be mindful of predators (and neighbors)

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19

Late Spring

- Give full run of coop
- Allow into outdoor run
- Growing – good feed is critical
- Can supplement with kitchen scraps but plenty of commercial feed should be available at all times
- Chickens are omnivores
- They will devour insects, weeds, seeds and grass



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Summer – Laying Eggs

- 16-24 weeks of age
 - Switch to layer feed, extra calcium
 - Combs and wattles are swollen and deep red color
- Have nest boxes ready
 - 1 for every 2 - 3 hens
 - Line with grass or straw
- Collect eggs at least once per day
- Ensure good ventilation and plenty of clean, fresh water



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Fall and Winter

Be sure the coop is winterized

- Weather-strip around windows and doors
 - Good ventilation but not drafty
- Fresh water always available
 - Electric heater or haul several times per day
- Need 15 hours of light
 - Use a timer if desired
- A little extra energy
 - Scratch or scratch block helps to keep occupied
- Hens are okay in the cold as long as the coop is dry and free from drafts



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Nutrition

- Use an age-specific feed
- Broilers and meat birds have unique needs/feed
- All Flock – for use with layers, broilers, turkeys, ducks, geese and pheasants

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Nutrition

- What is grit and why is it important?
 - Grit = small rocks
 - Stays in the gizzard and helps grind down food particles, making them ready for digestion
- Is Oyster Shell really needed?
 - Free choice oyster shell or other calcium source is highly recommended for laying hens

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What Breed?

- Brown eggs or white eggs?
 - Most prefer brown eggs
- These breeds are easy for beginners:
 - Barred Rock
 - Rhode Island Red
- Cold hardy, good layer, not broody
- Great temperament, very docile
- Ornaments are not recommended for beginners



Thank you.