

An Essential Guide to Raising Chickens



QUICK NUMBERS

Coop: about 4 sq. ft. per standard hen

Run: about 8-10 sq. ft. per chicken

Nest boxes: 1 for every 3-4 hens

First eggs: often around 18-24 weeks

Rooster: not needed for hens to lay eggs

WHAT TO FEED

0-8 WEEKS - CHICKS

Chick starter formulated for young, growing birds.

8-18 WEEKS - GROWING

Grower feed to support steady development without the extra calcium in layer feed.

18+ WEEKS - LAYING

Layer feed once hens reach laying age or begin producing eggs.

Offer oyster shell separately for laying hens. Birds eating foods beyond complete feed may also need appropriately sized grit.

COOP MUST-HAVES

- Dry bedding and good ventilation
- Roosting bars and nesting boxes
- Secure doors and predator-resistant latches
- Hardware cloth over vulnerable openings
- Enough room to prevent overcrowding

TIP: Chicken wire keeps chickens in. Hardware cloth is better at keeping predators out.

DAILY ROUTINE

MORNING

- ☐ Refresh water
- ☐ Check feed
- ☐ Make sure every bird looks active and alert

EVENING

- ☐ Collect eggs
- ☐ Count the flock
- ☐ Secure the coop for the night

HEALTHY CHICKEN CHECK

Learn what is normal for your flock. Sudden changes are often the first clue that something needs attention.

- Not eating or drinking
- Unusual lethargy or isolation
- Trouble walking or visible injuries
- Labored breathing or discharge
- Persistent or significant changes in droppings

If a bird seems seriously ill or does not improve, contact a veterinarian familiar with poultry.

EGGS 101

Most hens begin laying around 18-24 weeks, but breed, season, nutrition, and the individual bird all affect timing.

Production may slow during winter, molting, stress, illness, or as hens age. A rooster is only needed if you want fertilized eggs.

WEATHER WATCH

SUMMER

Provide shade, cool clean water, and strong ventilation. Watch for excessive panting or wings held away from the body.

WINTER

Keep the coop dry and ventilated, protect birds from strong drafts, and make sure drinking water stays unfrozen.

BEGINNER SHOPPING LIST

- ☐ Appropriate feed
- ☐ Feeder and waterer
- ☐ Secure coop and run
- ☐ Bedding
- ☐ Hardware cloth and secure latches
- ☐ Grit and oyster shell, as appropriate
- ☐ Rodent-resistant feed storage

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Safe shelter + good feed + clean water + daily observation

And yes, chicken math is real.