



## Backyard Poultry with Community CROPS

March 8, 2011

Presented by Leslie Pillen, Farm Program Manager

### Chicks

Supplies: Box, heat light, bulb, small waterer, small feeder, thermometer, pine shavings, feed, grit

Prior to Day 1: Get your chicks' home ready for them. A cardboard box with fine pine wood shavings is a good home. Avoid slick surfaces such as newspaper. Put a 75 watt light or heat lamp over the pen, and place all other supplies inside, so it can all warm up for a day before they arrive.

Day 1: If arriving by mail, your chicks have had no food or water. Before putting them in their box, dip each beak in water to encourage them to drink. Start them with just water for the first 20 minutes, then give them food. Start with the heat light a couple feet above the pen, with a temperature of about 95 degrees F. Keep it in one part of the pen, so they can move out of the light if they are too warm. Listen for gentle peeping. Alarmed noises means they are too hot or too cold. Be sure to handle them some every day so they get used to you.

Keep the chicks in a small space when very young, and gradually increase the amount of space as they grow. A pen with rounded edges is best. Feed chick starter (20%), unmedicated plus grit (this helps them "chew" their food). Chicks also need either sunlight or Vitamin D supplements.

For the first 6-8 weeks: Add 1 tsp. molasses and 1 Tbsp. raw apple cider vinegar per gallon of water as a replacement for Terramycin. You can also sprinkle some nutritional yeast or brewer's yeast on their feed for extra nutrients the first few weeks. Raise the heat light every week so that by week 6, it is 70 degrees F in the brooder house. They're ready to move outdoors when they've feathered out (~6 weeks).

### Pullets

After about 20 weeks old, your chicks will begin laying eggs. They need a nest box that is dark and feels safe, with straw to keep the eggs from breaking. Rubbermade totes work well so you can simply lift the lid from the outside to retrieve eggs. One nest for 2 birds is plenty.

### Laying Hens

Full-grown hens lay about 300 eggs/year. Switch hens' feed to 16% layer crumbles after the chick feed runs out. Make sure they continue to get grit (they'll find grit in the grass if you have them out). You may also need to supplement calcium with oyster shell if eggshells are thin. They love kitchen scraps, especially cabbage, apples, carrots, etc. Cabbage family provides calcium. No onions or garlic.



## Eggs

Chickens lay between about 7am and 2pm. Keep fresh straw in the nest box to keep eggs clean. Replace if it gets dirty. If dirty, clean with fine grit sand paper or water that is 10 degrees F warmer than the eggs. Keep eggs rotated in your fridge/carton so they stay fresh. Chickens lay small eggs when young, and gradually larger eggs as they age.

## The Henhouse

Mobile or stationary—benefits of each (Recommendation: mobile pen)

Safety from predators is key!

Components include:

- Coop: space for sleeping that's sheltered from wind and rain, with a door
- Nest box: small, dark space for laying
- Roost: 1-2 inch thick ledge; 1foot per bird
- Feeder: secure so it can't be tipped, or sat in
- Waterer: also secure from tipping or sitting
- Run: minimum 3 sq. ft. per bird

There are lots of pictures of different designs online.

## Additional Resources:

Eggs and Chicks, A Storey County Wisdom Bulletin

City Chicks, by Patricia Foreman

Chickens, by Sue Weaver

Backyard Poultry Naturally, by Alanna Moore

[www.urbanchickens.org](http://www.urbanchickens.org)

[www.thecitychicken.com](http://www.thecitychicken.com)

[www.backyardchickens.com](http://www.backyardchickens.com)

## Rhode Island Red Chicks through Community CROPS

*2 pick-up options:*

1. Monday March 14, 4-6pm, Sunset Community Farm, 4000 W F St.

Chicks Only: \$5

Chicks plus Organic Feed for 20 Weeks (34#): \$17

2. Monday May 9, 4-6pm, Sunset Community Farm, 4000 W F St.

Chicks at 8 weeks plus Organic Feed to 20 Weeks (11#): \$26

\*Bring a box for the birds and 2 containers for feed (such as 2 5-gallon buckets with lids).