



Backyard Poultry with Community CROPS

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Presented by Leslie Pillen, Farm Manager

Chicks

Prior to Day 1: Get your chicks' home ready for them. A cardboard box with fine pine wood shavings is a good home. Put a 75 watt light or heat light over the pen, and put water in 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, for 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. 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 them chick feed, unmedicated (50# bag) 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.

Pullets

Around 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 kale and cabbage, turnips, carrots, etc. Cabbage family provides calcium. No onions.

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: sheltered space for sleeping
- Nest box: small, dark space for laying
- Roost: 1-2 inch thick wood; 1ft. 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

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.thecitychicken.com

www.backyardchickens.com