THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE
OF
THE ENVIRONMENT
AND LIFE SCIENCES

18 USC 707

4-H Backyard Chicken Series:
Getting Started With Chickens

Hands Health Head Heart Hands Health Rhode Island 4-H Head Heart Hands

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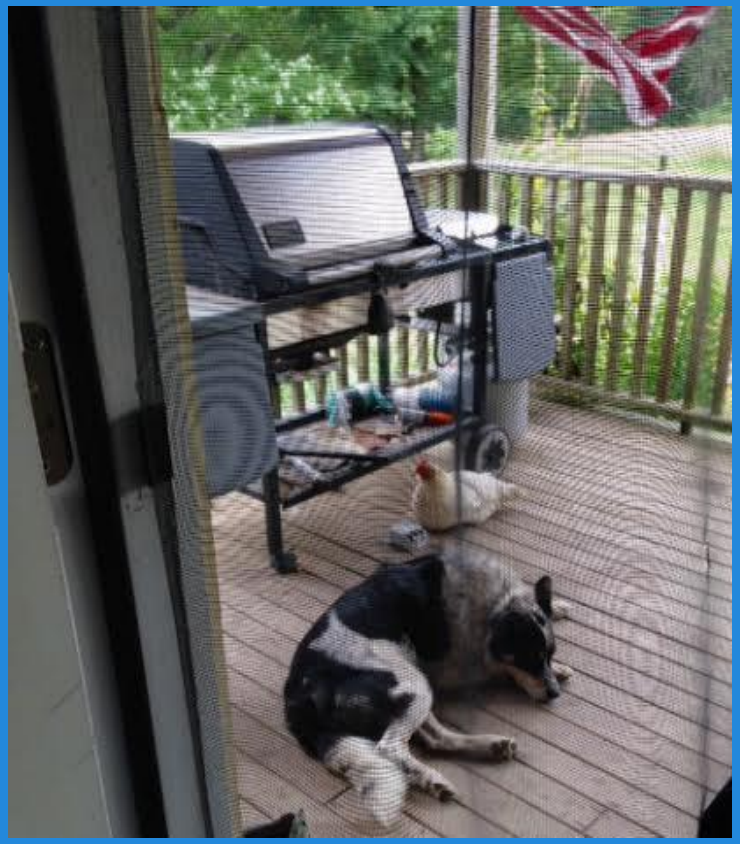
WELCOME !

Before you Start a Flock:

1. Check your local zoning regulations
    - http://www.rizoning.com/research/RIzords.html
2. Research and Learn
3. Prepare housing and equipment
4. **Purchase birds from a reputable source**

Why Raise Chickens?

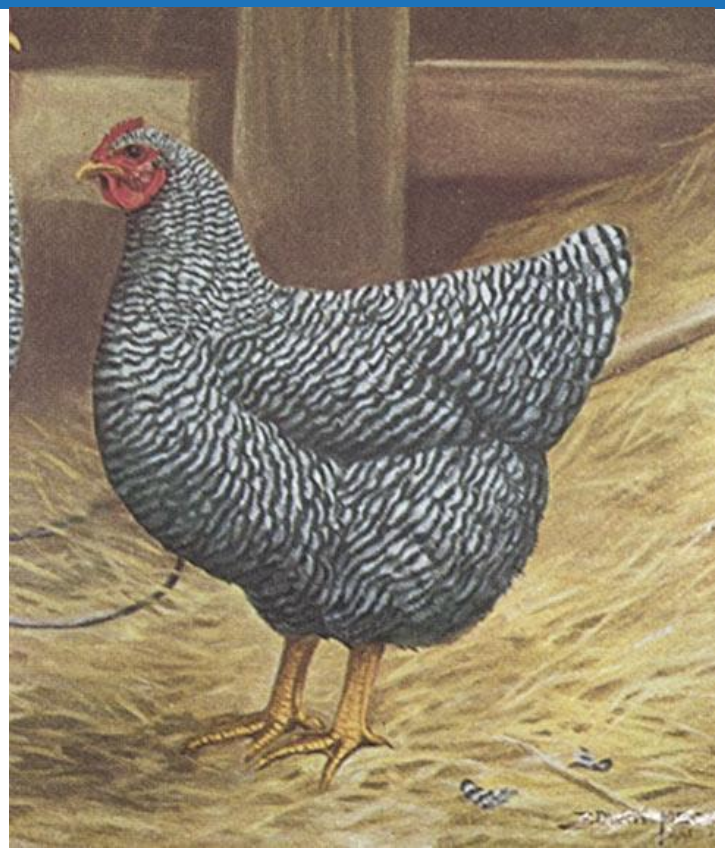


It started with the Red and Grey Jungle Fowl in Asia

Egg Production Breeds:

Rhode Island Red

More American Breeds: NH Reds, Barred Rock and Silver-Laced Wyandotte



Family Friendly Breeds

Buff Orpington

Black Australorp

Fun Fancy Breeds:
Silkies, Old English, many more

Egg Production Breeds:

White Leghorn

White Egg Layers

Egg Production Breeds: Ameraucana and Araucana

Commercial Breeds

Let’s start with the Basics.
All living creatures need ...

- Food
- Water
- Air
- Space
- Shelter

Food

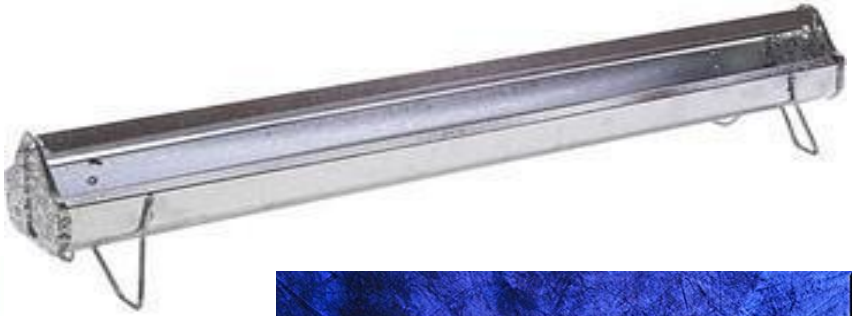
Chickens need:

- Carbohydrates
- Protein
- Fats
- Vitamins and Minerals

Buy feeds based on the age of your flock:

- Day old chicks – 6 weeks = Chick Starter
- 6 weeks- 18+weeks = Pullet Grower
- 19 weeks and older = Layer Ration

Feeder options



How much feed and How many feeders?

Day Old to 2 weeks = 1 linear inch of feeder space per chick

2 weeks old = 2 linear inch/ chick

8 weeks old and up = 3-4 linear inch/ bird

An adult hen will eat between ¼ to 1/3 of a pound of feed per day.

Fresh Water is Very Important!

Water Guidelines

- An adult chicken drinks .05 -.08 gallons/day in cold weather.
- In hot weather – double the amount!

- 50 chicks will need 1 gallon of water in a day.

- More waterers than necessary = smart flock owner.

Air

http://www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/AE/AE-97.html

Fresh Air Please!

- Ammonia gas from manure and wet bedding can damage lungs.

- Ventilate but please no drafts!

- A breeze on chicks can chill them too death!

Space: Housing Systems

76 square inches/bird

1.5 square feet/bird

PSU Photos

More Housing

House space: 1.5 square feet/bird
Pasture or Outdoor space: 60-86 square feet/bird

Space Requirements for Chicks

- .5 square ft/ chick (1 day to 6 weeks)

- So… how much space will 12 chicks need to have at least?

Shelter = Protection from...

- Cold Wind
- Rain
- Snow
- Hot Sun
- Predators, such as…

  Hawks, Owls, Foxes, Raccoons, Coyotes, Weasels, Fisher Cats, etc.

- Disease-carrying animals. (rodents, birds)

Shelter for Chicks

- Need to be inside a draft free building.

- Need a heat source, such as a **well-secured** heat lamp. (90 – 95 degrees F for day old chicks)

- Need to be confined to a small area close to the heat.
- Cats, dogs and other predators should not have access to chicks.

Some creative homemade brooders

A couple more

Shelters or Coops for Adult Chickens

Backyard Flock Style

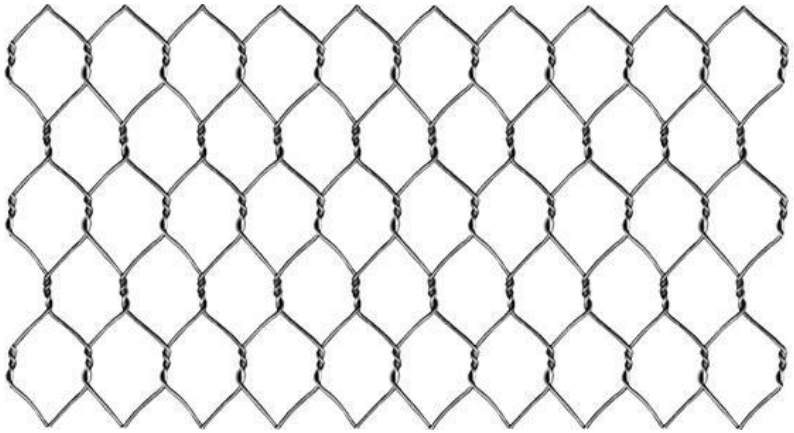
Typical Small Flock Housing

Coop: 1.5 square feet/hen Run: 8 square feet/hen

What are some good features of this set-up? How could this set-up be improved?

Be Creative!

The Run



Biosecurity

- http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/birdbiosecurity/

6 Simple Steps

- Keep your distance Isolate your birds from visitors and other birds.
- Keep it clean Prevent germs from spreading by cleaning shoes, tools and equipment.
- Don't haul disease home Also clean vehicles and cages.
- Don't borrow disease from your neighbor Avoid sharing tools and equipment with neighbors.
- Know the warning signs of infectious bird diseases Watch for early signs to prevent the spread of disease
- Report sick birds Report unusual signs of disease or unexpected deaths.

Other Things to Consider

LIGHT

Chicks need warm infrared light.

Hens need 14-16 hours of light to lay eggs consistently. Just a typical household bulb is enough.

Need to catch your chickens? Turn out the lights!

Roosts and Perches

Roosts are round wooden poles about 1.5 “ diameter. Each hen needs 6-7” of roost space for sleeping at night.

Perches are flat areas for birds to hang out, sit or sleep.

Nesting boxes

Provide 1 box for every 4-5 hens.

Nest Box Size:

12”w X 14” h X 12”d

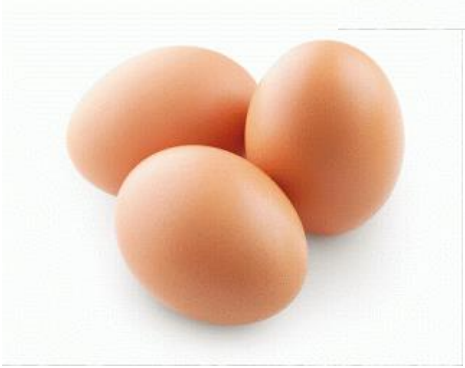
If you have 12 hens, how many nest boxes will you need?

Happy Chickens = Healthy Chickens

- Start with healthy stock.
- Fulfill the basic needs.
- Be observant.
- Practice biosecurity.

An Egg a Day or….

Many Hens lay…
1egg/25 hours for 8-10 days, then take a day off. 275 eggs/yr



Production schedule in temperate climate (12 birds)

http://www.fao.org

Age of flock (in weeks)	% of flock laying	No. of birds laying	No. of eggs produced per week
21	5	.6	4.2
22	10	1.2	8.4
25	52	6.24	43.68
28	84	10.08	70.56
31 (PEAK)	94	11.28	78.96
32 - 39	88	10.56	73.92
40 - 47	83	9.96	69.72
48 - 59	77	9.24	64.68
60 - 64	73	8.76	61.32
65 - 70	70	8.4	58.8

Bleaching of Color in a Layer

Body Part Time After First Egg

- Vent 4-7 days
- Eye Ring 7-10 days
- Ear Lobes (white leghorn) 14-21 days
- Base of Beak 4-6 weeks
- Tip of Beak 6-8 weeks
- Bottom of Feet 8-10 weeks
- Front of Shanks 15-18 weeks
- Rear of Shanks 20-24 weeks
- Hock Joint about 24 weeks

As the hen produces eggs, she diverts yellow color from certain portions of her body and deposits it into the yolks of the eggs.

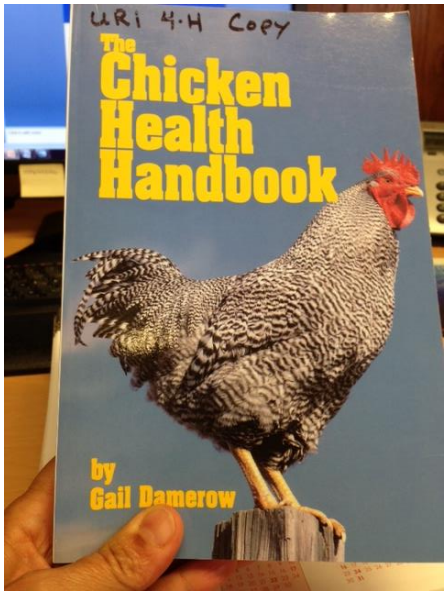
- http://msucares.com/poultry/management/culling.html

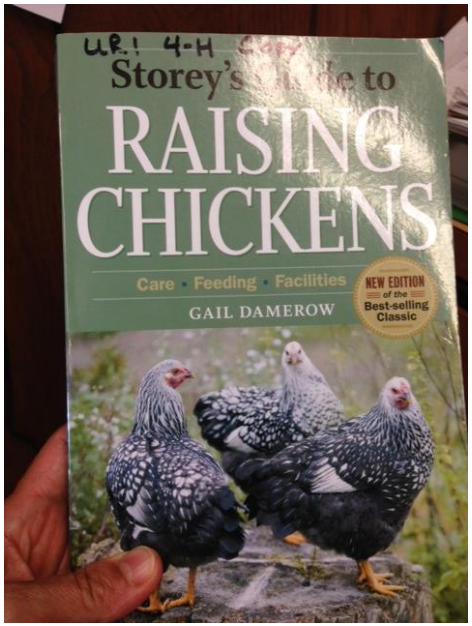
Some Helpful Resources

- Internet: Extension.org and university sites(.edu)
- URI 4-H Poultry Resource List
- The Little Rhody Poultry Fanciers: http://www.littlerhodypoultryfanciers.com/ Fall Show 10/16/16 at Washington County Fairgrounds

- Your Local Feed Store

- Books:





Thanks For Coming!

Learn more about 4-H clubs and programs at:

web.uri.edu/4h

401-874-2959

State 4-H Office
Peckham Farm/URI
Kingston, RI 02881

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Created by Heidi Wright in association with the professional development project of UMaine in Applied Poultry Science for agricultural service providers of New England, 2014-2016.

Are there any questions? Email your 4-H Office!