

Housing

A good chicken house will offer your poultry three things:

- 1) **Shelter** from the elements
- 2) A suitable place to lay eggs
- 3) A **secure area** to roost



One (1) bird needs 3 square feet in a coop.

**Shelter** If your chickens live outside, they will need shelter from the elements. There should be an area that is draft free. **Especially for young chicks!**

**Egg box** Chickens like to lay where it is dry and well-ventilated. It is also widely recommended to make laying boxes dark but this is more to prevent egg eating or other chickens having an experimental peck at a laying chicken's exposed soft bits! Putting down straw or shavings in boxes will reduce the chance of egg breakage.

**Roost** Although chickens do like to roost on perches in a coop, they don't have to. Sleeping chickens continue to defecate throughout the night and for that reason it is very important that the sleeping compartment is both easy to clean and well ventilated.



**Record Keeping**

It is essential that you keep good records!

Records should be kept of feed consumed, eggs produced, bird deaths, sick hens and non layers.

A sample record sheet is attached to show some areas that should be monitored.



**Layer record sheet** PHOTOCOPY THIS PAGE FOR RECORD KEEPING

Batch: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_  
Hatch: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
No. at beginning of period: \_\_\_\_\_ Age at beginning of period: \_\_\_\_\_

Feed given (bags)								
Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Week 1								
Week 2								
Week 3								
Week 4								
Total								

Death and culls								
Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Week 1								
Week 2								
Week 3								
Week 4								
Total								

Eggs laid (Saleable = G and Non Saleable = B)																
Day	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		Total	
	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B		
Week 1																
Week 2																
Week 3																
Week 4																
Total																

Mortality % \_\_\_\_\_ Feed intake \_\_\_\_\_ g/hen/day Rate of lay \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

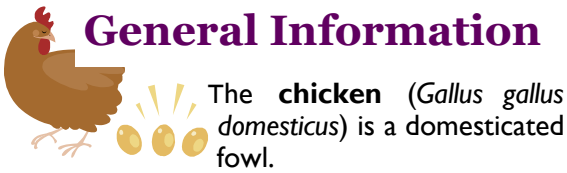


**Raising Layer Chickens**



**GET THE FACTS!**

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## General Information

The **chicken** (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) is a domesticated fowl.

Raising chickens for eggs is one of the most popular reasons for raising layer hens. Egg laying hens can be a great source for fresh chicken eggs every day, and it is also an excellent way to save money on store-bought chicken eggs!

## Nutrition & Feeding



Egg laying chickens are easy to raise, feed and care for. A good egg-laying hen will supply about a dozen eggs for every five pounds of feed. Chickens are omnivores. When feeding, start with a commercially-prepared chicken feed diet that is formulated for your chickens' specific age and purpose. Most commercial feed brands offer various feeds for each stage of a chicken's development, including **chick starter grower** for brooding and adolescent chickens; and **layer chicken feed** made especially for egg-laying hens who need the extra calcium.

Many poultry farmers feed their chickens using a "free-choice" method. Water is very, very important for a chicken's diet. A chicken's body is made up of mostly water. Thus, your chickens need to always have access to fresh, clean water at all times (and especially during the heat of summer!).

Chicken Feed Protein Requirements		
Age or Type of Chicken	Protein	Calcium
Pullets (to 8 wks)	20%	0.9%
Pullets (8-20 wks)	14%	0.8%
Layer Hens	16%	3.0%

## Health, Disease & Parasites

Poultry farmers may encounter some health issues when raising layers. These may include:



- ♦ **Egg binding** - a problem when a particularly large egg becomes lodged in the hen's vent. Egg binding can be controlled by preventing overfeeding, monitoring feed rations and monitoring hen size/fat cover.
- ♦ **Prolapse** -when the pink tissue from inside a hen's vent is pushed to the outside, Can be caused after an unusually large egg was laid. Carefully push the tissue back into the hen and apply hemorrhoidal cream. Isolate the hen while she's healing.
- ♦ **Cannibalism** - when the hens peck (and perhaps eat) each other, often killing the chickens lowest in the pecking order. This is often caused by inadequate space, food, water, light and nutrition.
- ♦ **Pests** - such as lice, mites, ticks, and fleas. The parasites may have been transferred to your flock from dogs, cats, or other "carriers". You should dust perches, feeding troughs, and other articles used by chickens with insecticide. After spreading the poison, wash the coop thoroughly and ventilate it well. Also, avoid overcrowding!
- ♦ **Rodents** - attracted by leftover feed. Rodents tend to spread disease and can also eat chicks and small-frame chickens. Clean-up well, seal bins of food (elevating off the ground may help) and remove piles of debris which might serve as breeding grounds to the rodents. Trapping and poisoning also works, as long as the poison is out of the reach of chickens, pets and young children.

- ♦ **Calcium deficiency** - symptoms in layer chickens include a shell-less egg or an egg with merely a thin shell (sometimes even translucently clear!). Layer hen's calcium requirements rise as she gets older or as the weather heats up. Feeding the chickens limestone or ground oyster shell supplements (offered free choice).

- ♦ **Fowl Pox** - a worldwide disease of poultry caused by viruses. There are two forms of the disease.



The first is spread by biting insects (especially mosquitoes) and the second is wound contamination which causes lesions on the comb, wattles and beak. Birds affected by this form usually recover within a few weeks. The second form is spread by inhalation of the virus and causes a diphtheritic membrane to

form in the mouth, pharynx, larynx and sometimes the trachea. The prognosis for this form is poor. There is no treatment, however vaccines are available for the unaffected flocks or individuals. If there is evidence of secondary bacterial infection broad-spectrum antibiotics may be of some benefit.

- ♦ **Internal Parasites** - live inside the chicken and rob them of food or blood. They include worms, coccidia and blood parasites. Chickens that have worms may look unhealthy and thin. They may gain weight slowly even though they eat more feed than chickens without worms, and they may lay fewer eggs. Note that many species of worms can live in chickens and not cause any problems. If you notice worms or your chickens don't seem to be as healthy as they could be, it may be time to check for worms and treat if necessary. Generally, treatment for chicken worms consist of worming the entire flock. Nematodes are the most common and most important helminth species in poultry.

## Some Interesting Facts

- The whole chicken egg is rated as **one of the best sources of high-quality protein**,
- Besides its high protein content, the chicken egg is known to have nearly every single nutrient needed for life, except vitamin C.
- Some breeds of chickens can lay coloured eggs (i.e. blue & green)
- The average hen lays 265 table eggs per year.
- The record for laying the most eggs in one day was seven.
- Hens do NOT need roosters (male chickens) to lay eggs. However they need to mate with a rooster to lay fertilized eggs (ones that hatch) in order to produce chicks.
- Roosters do NOT lay eggs.
- When there is no rooster in a flock of hens, one hen will take over the role, as much as possible, and will begin to crow and stop laying eggs.
- Chickens can cross breed with turkeys. The result is called a 'Turkin'.
- The greatest number of yolks ever found in a single chicken egg was nine.
- If you make a chicken think it's daylight at nighttime, they will lay eggs that are bigger with harder shells.



Turkin