

Chicken Keeping QuickFacts



Keeping chickens has many benefits but also requires a significant investment of both money and time. The decision to keep chickens should not be taken lightly as you will be responsible for properly caring for the animals. Keeping chickens improperly can subject you to enforcement actions by local and state agencies.



Family Safety

- Do not let children younger than 5 years of age handle or touch chicks without supervision.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after touching live poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam.
- Avoid touching your mouth before washing your hands.
- Do not eat or drink in the area where the birds live or roam.
- Do not let live poultry inside the house or in areas where food or drink is prepared, served, or stored.
- Clean equipment and materials associated with raising or caring for live poultry outside the house.



Buying Chickens

• Source

Buy chicks from National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) flocks and hatcheries with Pullorum free status.

• Cocc & Marek's Vaccination

Chicks should be vaccinated against Cocc and Mareks disease. Most hatcheries and breeders have this option. Wormers for chickens can be found in farm supply stores.

• Sexed Chicks

To avoid getting a rooster, buy sexed chicks instead of straight run. Sexed chickens have been inspected and have a much higher chance of being a hen.

• Unwanted Roosters

If you find that you have a rooster there are options available to get rid of it. You can slaughter the rooster yourself. If you do not want to slaughter the rooster, call feed stores to see if they know of anyone looking for roosters or if they accept roosters to be humanely slaughtered. Talk to friends or relatives in other areas to see if they are permitted by zoning to have a rooster and if they would like one.

Never let a rooster loose or advertise that you have a free rooster. It is your responsibility to properly dispose of your rooster.



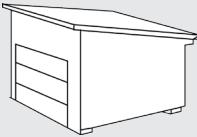
Prevent Illness

- Keep water dishes clean and food dry and contained.
- Clean your coop often in order to minimize health risks.
- Some common symptoms indicating injury, illness, or disease include: Coughing, wheezing, labored breathing, warts/scabs, swollen joints, loss of feathers, reduced egg production, thin egg shells, twisting of neck/head, not eating/drinking, weight loss, lack of coordination, enlarged abdomen.
- If you find a sick bird, isolate it from the flock.
- Contact a veterinarian for sick birds.



Be Courteous

- Be responsive to neighbors' concerns
- Keep coops and manure as far from your neighbors' houses as possible
- Keep property clean
- Keep chickens contained
- Properly manage manure



Shelter

- Size

Depending on the breed of chicken, a good rule of thumb is about 2-3 square feet per chicken inside the henhouse and 4-5 square feet per chicken in an outside run.

- Design

Structures need to be secure, well ventilated and easily accessible. Secure structures prevent predators and rodents from entering the structure. Good access will make cleaning and egg collection easier.



Food & Water

- Chicken Feed

Chick crumbles, starter formulated chicken layer feed, pellet vegetables, bread, bugs, and chicken scratch consisting of cracked corn, milo, and wheat are all acceptable foods for chickens. Keep dry and stored safely.

- Water

Make sure your chickens have clean water at all times. On average, 5 chickens can drink a half gallon of water per day.

- Storage

Keeping food where bugs, mice, and rats can't access it ensures that chicken feed does not become contaminated. Plastic containers or metal trash cans work just fine. Always make sure that the tops are closed and make sure that the feed inside can't get wet and turn moldy.



Bedding

Pine shavings, straw and corn cob bedding are best. Do not use cedar. It is recommended that bedding is at least 2 inches deep. Change bedding at least once per month.



Cleaning

An unsanitary coop runs the risk of infestations of lice, mites, and other parasites. You can use a Garden and Poultry Dust to dust the coop and keep out parasites. A coop should be thoroughly cleaned at least every 3 months. Wear gloves and a mask to cover your nose and mouth to keep from breathing in dust.



New Chickens

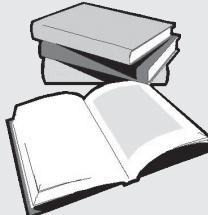
Chickens are not solitary birds and are said to provide the most production when surrounded by at least one other chicken. When purchasing new chicks, consider buying in multiples to ensure chicks are not isolated or lonely.

- Introductions

Introducing new chicks to your flock needs to be done carefully, as there is a clear pecking order among chickens. In order to ensure chicks safety, careful planning on how to introduce new chicks is necessary. When bringing new chickens into an existing flock the new chickens should be kept isolated from your flock for 2 weeks.

- Temperature Standards

For new chicks a heat lamp or other heating device will be needed to keep temperatures near 95 degrees for the first week. Decrease temperature 5 degrees per week after birth. Chicks can go outside the coop at 5 weeks with a heat lamp, but make sure the temperature does not get below 55 degrees until they are at least 10 weeks old.



Resources

The information provided in this fact sheet is a basic overview of information that new chicken keepers need to know. It is your responsibility to properly care for your animals and to do so you will need to continue learning. There are many sources of information available online to increase your knowledge.

You should also make yourself familiar with Ohio's Livestock Care Standards to ensure you are following State Law.