



Clutch ... the Essentials!

Our Guide to Raising
Healthy Happy Chickens



HomeoVet
THE NATURAL CHOICE

Raising chickens can be both emotionally and financially rewarding. Few things are cuter than tiny little yellow chicks chirping in your backyard, nor more satisfying than watching them grow into strong, healthy hens. And when they start to lay their first eggs, that's when the real fun begins as you can enjoy the most wonderfully tasty and nutritious eggs fresh to your table, each and every day.

Although raising chicken's is not hard, there's lots to know about these wonderful creatures to ensure you have all the tools to keep your birds healthy and happy. This quick and easy starter guide is designed to give you an overview, to kindle your desire for a backyard flock and get you started on your poultry journey.

First things first!
**LOCATION,
LOCATION,
LOCATION!**

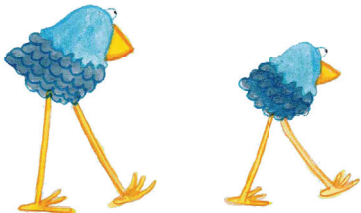
An important question to ask before you invest time and money in preparing for a new flock is whether you are permitted to keep chickens where you live. Although many cities and towns have embraced the benefits of backyard flocks, this is not the case everywhere, so it's important to make sure. It's also a good idea to check with your neighbors that they don't have any major objections. Perhaps tempt them with the prospect of farm fresh eggs delivered to their door! **Who could resist?!**

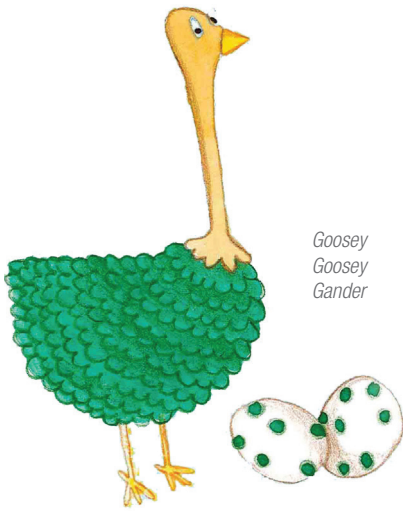
Do You Have Enough Space?

It's also important to ensure that you have enough space to raise healthy, happy chickens. Once they are fully grown, each bird will need a minimum of 4 square feet of indoor space and 5-10 square feet of outdoor space.



Three Little Birds





Goosey
Goosey
Gander

The **CHICKEN** or **THE EGG?** A Quick List

Chicks, Pullets or Hens

When looking to get your new flock off the ground (excuse the pun as chickens can't actually fly!), a major choice you will need to make is whether to purchase mature hens, pullets or newly hatched chicks.

While tiny chicks are adorable and it's incredibly rewarding seeing them grow into a mature, egg-laying hen, raising chicks also requires a lot more time, effort and money to ensure they have everything they need to grow and develop.

When looking to purchase new chicks, you will need:

- a safe, clean, draft free room where they will be able to relax and feel safe
- heat lamps
- litter or shavings for the floor
- feeders and chick starter feed
- waterers and clean, fresh water
- to make sure the chicks you buy are from a credible U.S. Pullorum-Typhoid Clean hatchery that vaccinates chicks for Marek's Disease or a hatchery that participates in the NPIP (National Poultry Improvement Plan) program

If you opt for pullets or adult hens, their immediate needs will be similar, but on a slightly grander scale. You will need:

- a safe home – the chicken coop
- a safe run / garden / backyard
- suitable bedding
- nest boxes
- food dishes and appropriate chicken feed
- water dishes and clean water

Welcoming Your New Chicks Home

There are several key things that you must provide for your new chicks to ensure they have all they need to grow and develop:

- 1) A clean, draft-proof brooder pen** - Buy or build your own.
- 2) Warmth** - Use a thermometer to get your temperatures right and remember that as your chicks grow you will need to adjust the temperature in the brooder.
- 3) Water** - Clean, fresh water should be available for your new chicks, but without a mother hen to teach chicks to drink, you may need to show them.

4) Good Food - Good quality complete feed, fed according to recommendations. And, if you can, go organic.

5) Consistent lighting - A hen's routine operates around daylight so familiarize yourself with what they require for their own stage of growth for optimum egg laying.

6) Bird handling - Build a bond with your chicks by gently holding and petting them each day. Be sure to wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling the chicks though, for your health and theirs.

Remember To ...

Keep It Clean

It's vital that you keep the chicks' home clean and dry, including bedding and feeders, whilst also keeping their waterers clean, fresh and debris-free.

Listen To Your Chicks

When everything is right, chicks will emit a soft cheeping. A chick that is stressed will have a shrill, higher pitched or very rapid cheep. Translate this as a call for help and look for what could be the problem. Are the chicks too hot or cold? Is their litter wet? Or are they hungry?



From Brooder to Coop: 6 - 8 Weeks

Between weeks 6 and 8, your chicks will experience rapid growth and will need twice the floor space they started with, so make sure the plans for your coop can accommodate their growth to full sized adult birds.

Chickens are great fun to watch, so it's a great idea to position the coop close to a window so you can enjoy their daily antics and adventures. But aside from your entertainment, it's important to consider these important questions:

- 1)** Are there local rules about where the coop can be built?
- 2)** Is the area protected against strong sun, wind, predators, loud noises and other stressors?
- 3)** Is the spot flat, with good drainage?
- 4)** Does the coop location provide both sun and shade for your birds to enjoy?
- 5)** Is the location convenient and close to utilities such as water and power to ensure it's as easy for you as possible to manage things like feed, water and cleaning out?

9 Weeks To Maturity

By the time your birds reach about 9 weeks of age they are really ready to start to spread their wings (metaphorically speaking!) and will start to explore your backyard during the day time while they return to the security of their coop at night.

As your birds get braver, it is a good idea to train them to return to the coop using treats and vocal cues, so you can get them inside when you need to.

Helpful Hint - Put a light on in the coop when it's time for the chickens to return, it'll help draw them in during training.

Maintaining a Chicken Friendly Back Yard



Chickens are a great way to help control insects, slugs, snails and weeds, while providing natural fertilizer for your garden. Be aware, however, that their foraging isn't limited to the plants you don't like, so protect your garden and flower beds

with fencing. Be sure to maintain your fences throughout the year to keep your birds safe from predators and also from their wandering tendencies.

An essential addition to any chicken-friendly back yard is a dust bath, which can help to prevent external parasites such as mites and lice. An easy way to create one is to find a container at least 12" deep, 15" wide and 24" long and fill it with an equal blend of sand, wood ash and natural soil. Your chickens will be in dirt-bath heaven!



Your First Eggs – 18 Weeks

Many people new to keeping chickens don't realize that a rooster is not necessary for egg production. So, if you (and your neighbors) would like a quieter life, consider keeping your flock rooster free!

Over the lifetime of your hens, you can expect each bird to lay approximately 580 eggs, with up to 250 eggs per year laid during her most productive years. Good nesting boxes are essential, with at least one 1-foot cube nest box located up off the floor for every four hens, lined with a thick layer of straw or other bedding to cushion the eggs and keep them clean and unbroken.

Once your hens have reached egg laying age they will not only provide you with hours of fun and entertainment, but will also hopefully provide a plentiful supply of delicious fresh eggs. From here you will need to ensure their continued good health with a constant supply of fresh water, good nutrition, a clean environment and good health care practices.



Keeping Your Hens Healthy!

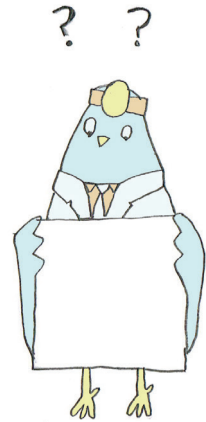
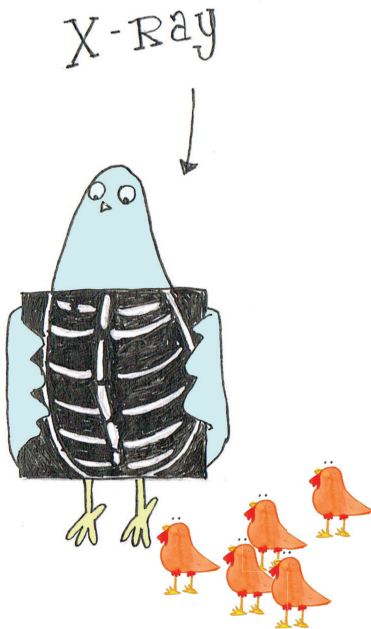


Healthy hens are happy hens and happy hens are just great fun! To make sure the fun times continue, there are some important biosecurity measures to be aware of to help maintain good health.

- 1) Don't mix chickens of different ages.**
- 2) Clean and disinfect equipment** between uses for different groups of chickens.
- 3) Keep your chickens home.** Don't let them wander from the yard, or take them to places where birds mix.
- 4) Quarantine new chickens** at least 30 feet apart from the rest of your flock for 30 days. Don't let them join the rest of your flock unless they fly through the quarantine period in perfect health (yet more flying pun's intended!).
- 5) Don't let your chickens mingle with other types of poultry, pet birds, or wild birds.** Birds can share germs, mites, and intestinal worms and it's just not worth the risk.
- 6) Don't share equipment with other flock keepers** unless it has been cleaned and disinfected first.
- 7) Limit visitors to your flock.** If you do have visitors, ask them to wear clean shoes and wash their hands before interacting with your birds.

Poultry Health Problems... And How to Deal With Them

If your feathered friends are looking a little under the weather or behaving differently, you should investigate further. As while raising chickens is relatively straightforward, they do sometimes encounter various health issues that may need attention. As we all do from time to time! Read on to find out more about some common health challenges your brood may face and how to tackle them.



Chicken Mites

The most common health problem you are likely to face as a chicken keeper is a visit from pesky poultry parasites!

Poultry mites are tiny crawling external parasites that bite and chew, extracting blood from the host. Not only do they cause your chickens discomfort but also feather loss, anemia or in extreme cases may even result in death.

While a mite's life cycle is only 5-7 days, each can lay more than 100,000 eggs during that time, so treatment must be repeated and ongoing to completely eradicate them.

A good dirt bath, preferably enhanced with some wood ash and food-grade diatomaceous earth, is your flock's first line of defence against mites and is an essential addition to any chicken-friendly back yard. However, in extremely hot and humid areas where mite populations flourish or during long periods of wet weather when the chickens might not have the opportunity to bathe, the mites often get the upper hand and you may need to consult with your veterinarian as to the best approach to take for your flock.



Worms

Just like in our pets and in farm animals, worm infestations can be extremely harmful to our chickens.

There are three types of parasitic worms that chickens can contract: **Roundworms** (which include threadworms, hairworms and the large roundworm) - can be found anywhere in your chicken's digestive system; **Gapeworms** - attach themselves to the trachea of the chicken; **Tapeworms** - attach themselves to the lining of the intestine.

It can be hard to tell if your chickens have worms, which is why prevention and regular worming is important. A chicken with worms will go off lay, may have diarrhea, will eat more, and in severe cases will lose weight. A serious infection can be fatal. Chickens with Gapeworm will stretch their neck gasping for air, which is often mistaken for a respiratory infection.

HomeoVet's AVIAN WRM CLEAR is ideal for treatment of worm signs in chickens where the medicinal ingredients are 100% natural and a drug free approach is favored. It is also ideal for use in situations where concurrent use with conventional wormers is indicated or to support recovery from worm infestation.

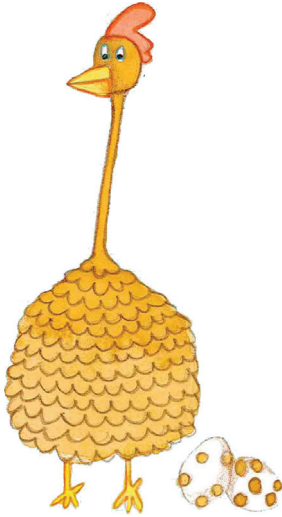
Hen Pecking, Bullying And Cannibalism

Sometimes chickens actually peck at each other's feathers and skin, a behavior called pecking. Within flocks, chickens and other types of poultry have a social hierarchy referred to as a pecking order and mild pecking is normal in the establishment of this order. However, in extreme cases pecking can become excessive and even result in the death of a bird.

Common causes of pecking include overcrowding, not enough food or water, too-bright lights left on too long, or factors that may cause undue stress. Consequently, it's important to try to minimize stress, remove any injured or aggressive birds and follow guidelines for lighting in your coop. Many of our customers have had good success with HomeoPet's Anxiety Relief which promotes relief from fear or anxiety in stressful situations.



The Greater Knitted Curlew



Digestive Issues

The most common culprits responsible for digestive woes in chickens are worms (see before) and crop malfunctions, or squids can also be caused by stress or harmful bacteria in the digestive system.

A chicken crop is located beneath a chicken's neck against the breast towards their right center and after swallowing food, the crop is the first part of the digestive tract. The crop should be empty by the morning and should fill during the day. Food remaining in the crop too long might over produce yeast causing an infection and illness. Making sure your chickens have access to small amounts of gravel can help food to move this through and pass normally.

If your chickens are experiencing digestive disturbances, HomeoVet's AVIAN DIGESTIVE UPSETS may reduce discomfort and provide temporary relief from minor digestive problems such as vomiting, squirts, wet loose stool, diarrhea and retained gas.

Egg Bound Hens

This is basically when the egg gets stuck! The hen will strain to pass the egg but will not be able to and egg binding can be fatal if not spotted and treated.

The recommended treatment for an egg bound hen is a warm bath to loosen the muscles and hopefully help her to pass the egg. If this fails to help her to pass the egg, then a trip to your veterinarian is your next step.





We hope you enjoyed our guide to keeping happy, healthy chickens, and found it useful and informative.

If you need further help and advice or more information about our new Avian products, please get in touch.

Respiratory Disease

Respiratory disease often presents itself with one or more birds sneezing, with a possible runny nose and foamy, running eyes. In severe cases diseased birds can have swollen sinuses, may stop eating and in extreme cases may die.

If any of your birds develop one or more of these signs, consult with your vet as antibiotic treatment may be advised. Birds suffering with respiratory disease should always be isolated from the other healthy hens and given lots of TLC.

For a natural approach to tackling respiratory issues your flock may face, HomeoVet's AVIAN NOSE RELIEF provides support for a healthy nasal and sinus tract and can aid with a runny nose, watery eyes, sneezing and congestion. If one bird shows symptoms, isolate it and treat the whole flock with AVIAN NOSE RELIEF to help prevent infection.

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