

# So... You Want to Raise Your Own Eggs?

## A 101 EXTENSION FACT-SHEET ON BACK YARD CHICKENS

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Created April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020



### BREED CONSIDERATIONS

- Breeds that serve well for egg production and meat production include Rhode Island Red, Plymouth Rock, New Hampshire, Wyandotte, & Buff Orpington.
- Leghorns also serve as great layers but may be smaller than other breeds.

### CARING FOR THE YOUNG BIRD

- Utilize cardboard or other objects to house the brood chicks. A diameter of 6 feet is plentiful for 50 chicks. (cardboard ring works best)
- Ensure adequate feeder & drinker space.
- Ensure brood chicks are maintained under a temperature of 90 degrees Fahrenheit at chick level for the first week of life.
- Drop temperatures 5 degrees Fahrenheit each week until the chicks are 5 weeks old. Do not drop below 70 degrees Fahrenheit in temperature. Adjusting heat lamp height will help with this process.
- Maintain a clean environment by using absorbent litters such as pine shavings. Avoid hardwood shavings as they mold.

### FEEDING THE BACK-YARD BIRD

- Feed starter rations until 6 weeks of age.
- Feed grower rations between 6 - 18 weeks of age.
- Feed layer rations after 18 weeks of age
- Supplement free choice oyster shells for calcium supplement to ensure hens lay unblemished eggs.
- Some layer rations may contain calcium supplements such as oyster shells.

### HOUSING & CONFINMENT

- In the future, plan to provide at least 2-3 ½ square feet of floor space for full grown egg producers
- Maintain house temperature of 70 degrees F or above.
- Small backyard flocks should be fenced if allowed out of pen since they are easy prey. This also keeps neighbors happy.
- As birds near 18 to 20 weeks of age, ensure nesting boxes are in place. Dimensions: 12 by 12 inches
- Boxes should be at least 2 feet above ground and have a perch of about 4 inches in front of every box.
- One box for every 4-5 hens is adequate.
- Make sure boxes are half filled with pine shavings or other clean litter material for hens to lay.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Check local zoning regulations involving poultry. For example, some areas have flock limits or allow hens but no roosters.
- Birds & supplies can be purchased at your local hardware, feed store, or online.
- Day length influences egg production. Consider adding lighting to achieve a min of 16 hours of daylight.
- No roosters are required for hens to begin laying
- Maintain clean waterers and feeders.
- Check for eggs twice daily.
- You must have an egg candler's license from Georgia Department of Agriculture, before you are legally allowed to sell to the public.
- Enjoy FRESH eggs!

*Extension publications are available online & in every county Extension service. Contact your local office for more detailed information for maintaining the backyard flock.*



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