

## RAISING AND CARING FOR CHICKENS

Siegel's Country Store

Updated: April 1, 2016



### DAY OLD CHICKS NEED: Heat — Water — Feed — Bedding

#### Heat

- ✓ Keep Chicks at a Temperature of 90-95 degrees for the first week.
- ✓ Judge the height of the heat bulb. If chicks are huddled together, you need to lower the heat source. If they are not underneath and are trying to get to the corners, it is too hot, you need to raise the bulb. Approximately 20 inches from chicks is a good place to start. Make sure you have adequate space for the chicks to get out from under the heat. Don't place their feed and water directly under the heat source. Raise weekly as chicks grow.
- ✓ You can discontinue heat bulb when room temperature is maintained around 70 degrees during the day. You may need to use the heat bulb at night when it gets cooler. They will pile together and possibly smother to try to keep warm.

#### Water

- ✓ Provide water as soon as possible. It is recommended to use a vitamin electrolyte source in the water for the first week. **NEVER** allow chicks to run out of water. Keep waterers clean.
- ✓ After a few days, put a block of wood under feeders and waterers to keep birds from scratching out feed or getting litter in the water. Elevate feeders and waterers as they grow.

#### Feed

- ✓ Chicks should have feed at all times. We recommend a 22% medicated starter for all layer and broiler chicks.
- ✓ We have non medicated chick starter and non GMO chick starter if you prefer a non medicated program

#### Bedding

- ✓ Keep litter clean. Wood shavings are recommended as a clean source of bedding.
- ✓ Keep Chicks free from drafts.

### HEALTH

Chicks are generally easy to raise with few health problems. When chicks are very young, watch for "pasting up." This happens when the feces is a pasty substance that sticks to the chick. This needs to be washed off with warm water and then dried. This should not be a problem after the first week or two.

Most chick loss is not due to health issues but rather predators. Cats, hawks, weasels, rats, and mink all love the taste of chicken! You need to have a secure area to keep the chicks safe. Even a small entry hole in a pen can make them easy prey. It is best to 'close up' your birds at night if they are free ranging layers.

#### Broilers

Broilers in confinement will be mature after only 6-7 weeks. We recommend keeping the birds on a high protein diet since they are growing so rapidly. **DO NOT** keep the lights on 24 hours per day. They need time to rest to avoid the leg issues that can develop when they are approaching a heavy weight. Free range broilers will take a few weeks longer to be ready for processing.

#### Layers

Layers will begin laying eggs at around 6 months of age. They will first lay smaller eggs, then maybe a double yolk egg, and then settle into a pattern of normal egg laying.

**Molting:** This is a natural occurrence for egg-laying chickens at about 1 year of age. They will stop laying, lose their feathers, and the combs will become dull. This generally happens in September or October and will last approximately 2 months. When they are finished with the molting process they will begin a new egg-laying cycle.

Layers can be productive for several years depending on the breed.

Birds in confinement may enjoy table scraps such as greens, lettuce, and melon rinds as a treat on a limited basis. They should be fed a complete layer as their main source of feed.

### **COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Do I need a rooster to get eggs?

No. Hens will lay eggs without a rooster in the flock. Many roosters as they age will become very aggressive towards people. It can be desirable to have them to protect the flock, but more often than not they are eliminated due to their behavior. And, they do not crow only at dawn, but do so all day long.

Why are the birds picking each other?

- When they get new feathers, they may pick at the new growth. If they are picking each other to the point of drawing blood or causing mortality, it can be that there are too many birds in too small of a space.
- They may not have adequate feed, water, or ventilation.
- They may have improper nutrition. They need a complete layer or broiler ration.
- Sometimes there is a dominant bird in the flock that is a trouble maker.
- They may have mites.

Why are they eating their own eggs?

Always gather the eggs as quickly as possible after they have been laid. If there is inadequate space for the amount of hens and many have to lay in the same nest, there is the risk of having the eggs crushed. Once hens get a taste of eating eggs, it can be almost impossible to get stopped. It is best to avoid the issue by having adequate space for a trouble free flock. However, you do not need a nest for each individual bird. Several will choose to lay in the same nesting area, which is usually fine.

Why do they stop laying during the cold winter or heat of summer?

You can maintain production during the winter and summer months by keeping an open water source and at least 12 – 15 hours of light per day. Egg production is most effected by water and light. Frozen waterers in winter or dry waterers in the summer will stop egg production almost immediately. If water is not provided for an extended period of time, you will force the birds into a molt (shedding feathers and stopped production) and it will be a long period before they will again begin to lay eggs.

When the temperature drops below 50 degrees, the amount of feed will need to increase. Rule of thumb is for every 10 degrees decrease in temperature, the feed consumption will increase 5%. Even during inclement weather be sure there is adequate ventilation for your birds. If you detect a strong ammonia smell, you will need to provide fresh air and open up your building a bit to provide good air quality.

**A Word of Caution:** If you plan to add to your flock, be careful of introducing birds from a flea market, or auction. Bring those birds home and isolate them away from your flock for a few weeks or get birds from a local healthy source. An existing flock may not accept new birds and will pick or fight. Putting them together at night may help accustom them to each other.

It is also a good idea to occasionally dust your birds for lice using a poultry dust usually a Sevin or Carbaryl dust that is safe and often used for vegetables as well as poultry, dogs and cats. If you prefer a natural dust, Diamataceous Earth works well also. Fowl need to dust themselves as a form of cleaning their feathers and as protection against external parasites. Provide a dusting box or outside area for a dust bath. A good combination is a mixture of sand, dirt, wood ash, and Diamataceous Earth.

Chickens, like most animals, can get worms. If you see worms in the manure, treat for worms in the water or in the feed. A low level of worm infestation is not usually harmful to the birds. There is usually no need to deworm on a regular basis.

**If you have questions, please ask us. If we don't know the answers, we know someone who does!**

## 'CHICK' SUPPLIES AVAILABLE HERE AT SIEGEL'S

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### HEAT

Heat shield and bulb: Use 125 or 250 watt bulbs depending on how big your pen is and the number of birds you have. Reminder: Chicks need to be kept at a temperature between 90° to 95°.

### COOP OR HOUSING

For the first several weeks, make sure your chicks are protected from predators such as cats, weasels, etc. Putting your young chicks in a cardboard box in the garage or confined area in their house will keep them protected and safe.

### FEED

Start with a medicated feed for the first couple weeks. This feed is not a hormone or antibiotic, but an approved medication for the prevention of coccidiosis. After that, you can keep them on the medicated feed or switch to a non-medicated grower/finisher until they are ready for market or to lay eggs. If you are raising layers, we have a three-step feeding program.

### COCCIDIOSIS

This is a microorganism parasite that lives in the soil and can be transmitted to poultry as well as other animals. It lives in the intestines and can cause bloody diarrhea and unthrifty birds. It can be fatal to young poultry. Once the birds are older, it is usually not an issue. Mature birds are able to cope. Medicated starter feed is good insurance to keep young birds from getting coccidiosis.

### WATER

It is recommended that you add a powder containing vitamins and electrolytes to the water source to get your birds off to a healthy start. During the heat of the summer or other stressful conditions, it is also recommended to add the vitamin/electrolyte powder to keep the birds well hydrated.

### BEDDING

It is really important to keep chicks clean and dry. We recommend using pine shavings. Newspaper is too slick and can cause the chicks to spraddle leg.

### LICE CONTROL on LAYERS

Chickens naturally need to dust. It's their natural way to control parasites. You can add **Diatomaceous Earth** to the dusting bed to eliminate parasites. It can also be added to their feed as a natural wormer.

### DIAMATACEOUS EARTH

Fossilized remains of tiny organisms are called diatoms. Their skeletons are made of a natural substance called silica. When a bug that has an exoskeleton comes in contact with diatomaceous earth, it compromises their waxy coating so that their innards turn into teeny tiny bug jerky. It is an approved organic method of pest control.

### NEW LINE OF SPECIALTY ITEMS

Check out our new line of poultry (layer) specialty additions. Treats, egg wipes, egg wash, scratch grains, oyster shell, and grit and poultry conditioner.

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If you need more information or have any questions, give us a call at 937-473-2808 or email us at [siegelscountrystore@yahoo.com](mailto:siegelscountrystore@yahoo.com).

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