

Chicken Basics and More!

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Chicken Basics and More!

Laura Faley

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Chickens!

What are Chickens?

Chickens originated as Wild Jungle Fowl.

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Wild Jungle Fowl

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Chickens!

What are Chickens?

Chickens are domestic birds that:

- ♦ have been selectively bred to produce more food than their native or wild counterparts
- ♦ prefer to live near people
- ♦ are healthier with human care
- ♦ generally do not fly

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Contents

- ♦ Most Common Breeds of Chickens
- ♦ Chicken Management
 - ♦ Housing
 - ♦ Feeding
 - ♦ Health
- ♦ Egg Basics
- ♦ Raising Chicks

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Why Have Chickens?

- ♦ Family Food – for eggs and meat
- ♦ Pets and Pleasure
- ♦ Fertilizer for your garden
- ♦ Pest control

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Chickens

Purpose	Size
❖ Egg-Laying	❖ Bantam
❖ Meat birds	❖ Standard
❖ Fancy	❖ Large

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Breeds of Chickens

- ◆ Each purpose for having chickens determines which breeds you choose to raise.



- ◆ Each breed of chicken has a specific purpose.

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Chickens

Common Breeds

- ◆ Rhode Island Red
- ◆ Buff Orpington
- ◆ Plymouth Barred Rock
- ◆ AmeriCauna
- ◆ Jersey Giant

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Rhode Island Red



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Buff Orpington



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Plymouth Rock



Barred Rock rooster



Buff Rocks

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Wyandottes



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Americaunas



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Aracauna Chicken



Provided by Michael von Luitwitz



Provided by Michael von Luitwitz

Rumpless = no tail feathers

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Americaunas



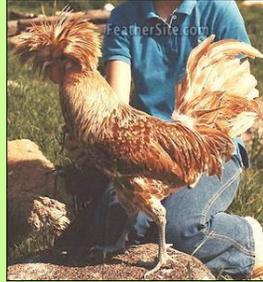
- Lay green, blue, and beige-pink eggs
- Called Easter Egg Chickens

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Fancy Chickens



Polish

One of the oldest recorded breeds – back to the 16th Century

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Fancy Chickens



Polish



Sultan

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Fancy Chickens



Polish



Sultan



Sultan Hen

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Fancy Chickens



Silkies –
the
Favorite

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Barnies (Barnyard Crossbreds)



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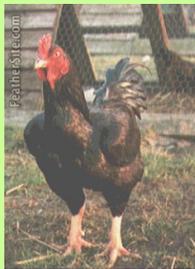
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Meat Chickens



White Cornish Bantam

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Dark Cornish Gamebird

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Old Breeds

Dominiques



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Old Breeds



Rooster



Hen

Dorking

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Old Breeds



Malay cock



White Leghorn hen

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Blue Orpingtons from Great Britain

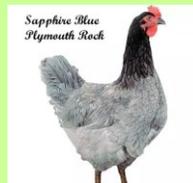


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New "Breeds" or hybrids



Sapphire Blue
Plymouth Rock



Goldtop



Black Comet



Golden Star

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What is your purpose for having chickens?

- Pets and Pleasure
 - Choose long-lived breeds, and either hardy or needing extra care
- Family Food – for eggs or meat
 - Choose good layers, standard-sized hybrids
 - Efficient feed conversion
- Fertilizer and Pest-control
 - Choose hardy & easy-care

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Zoning Regulations

- Skagit County – no limit
- Mount Vernon city limits – none
- Anacortes city limits – 6 hens, no rooster
- Sedro city limits – 3 hens, no rooster
- La Conner – “No unreasonable noise or odor that would annoy or endanger people w/in 100 ft”

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Roosters

- ♦ Crow
- ♦ Father more chicks
- ♦ 50% of chicks are little roosters
- ♦ Roosters fight
- ♦ Roosters crow
- ♦ More chicks = More roosters



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Rooster management

- ♦ Keep only one rooster (and a spare, if breeding)
 - Temperament !!!
 - Excellent body
 - Beautiful
- ♦ Collect all eggs
- ♦ Butcher (or sell) any extra cockerels
- ♦ The farm world has plenty of beautiful, extra roosters

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Free-Range



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Large-Scale Free-Ranging



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Poultry Management

- ◆ Protection from predators
- ◆ Feeding
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Health
- ◆ Raising Chicks

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Protection from predators

- Pet dogs
- Owls
- Raccoons
- Opossums
- Weasels
- Rats
- Coyotes

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Fencing

- Poultry netting quick and easy to use



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Fencing

- 2"x4" welded mesh fencing is sturdier



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Fencing

- Portable electric mesh from Premier 1



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Feed & Nutrition

Chickens are "omnivores"

- 16-18% protein
 - Insects & seeds, meat
- Fat & Carbohydrates
 - Grains & seeds, insects
- Calcium & other minerals
- Sand (called "grit")

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Feed & Nutrition

“Scratch” is NOT a complete feed

- Scratch is to encourage chickens to scratch and forage for insects and worms when free ranged
- Think of it like cookies used to bribe your chickens

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Housing Criteria for Chickens

- Protection from wind and rain
- Protection from predators
- Good air circulation
- Roosts 3' – 6' above the floor
- Deep “litter” on the floor
- Lighting optional (see lighting later)

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Mud and wet are the chicken's enemy.

- Mud puddles \implies Internal parasites
- Damp \implies Fungal infections
- Blowing rain \implies Sinus infections

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Deep litter

- Footing in coops needs to be dry and fluffy
- A good rule of thumb is:
 - 1" of depth for every 1 foot of height the roost is above the floor
- Deep litter cushions their feet when they drop down off the roost
- Deep litter desiccates (dries out) droppings and kills pathogens

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Deep litter

- Wood shavings
- Straw
- Dry grass clippings
- Dry leaves
- Sawdust or wood pellets
- Dry, fluffy dirt
- SOFT sand

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Nesting Boxes

- Weather tight
- Elevated off the floor – usually about 18”
- Some nesting material, such as straw
- A front edge to keep eggs from rolling out
- 1 Box for every 3-5 hens

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Nesting boxes



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Nesting Boxes



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Nesting Boxes

Recommendation: Accessible from outside the coop!



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Dust Bathing

To combat external parasites

- Sand
- Dry dirt
- Ashes
- Diatomaceous earth



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Coop Design

The goal is:

- Keep neighbor dogs and other predators OUT
 - Some of our predators are from the sky
- Keep chickens IN
 - Chickens can “fly” or hop over 3-4 feet

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Examples of Coops



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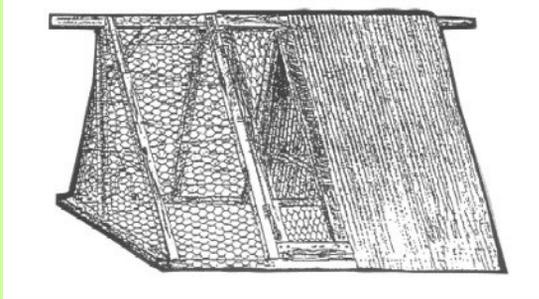
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Automatic waterers



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Roost



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Coop Lighting

- 14-16 hours of light per day
- 50-100 lumens (directed downwards)
- Beginning in August for Skagit Co
- Automatic timer
 - 6 AM – 9 AM
 - 6 PM – 8 PM

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Health

- ♦ Viruses – Air borne
 - ♦ Avian Flu
 - ♦ Good air circulation
- ♦ Bacteria
 - ♦ Coccidiosis – Intestinal
 - ♦ Keep environment dry
 - ♦ Antibiotic – Terramycin powder or Cayenne pepper
- ♦ Worms – Internal parasites
 - ♦ Round worms – Pig Swig
 - ♦ Drinking from mud puddles

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Processing

- There are death sentences on the farm
 - Harvesting for food
 - Hens who are egg eaters
 - Extra roosters
 - Aggressive birds
 - Sick or diseased birds
- Processing equipment available
 - NABC handout www.agbizcener.org

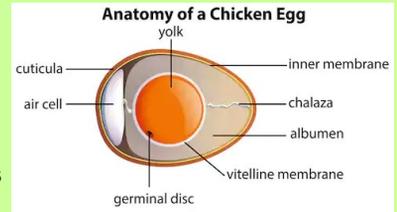
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The Anatomy of an Egg

- Shell
- Yolk
- Nucleus
- Albumin
- Ligatures
- Air sac



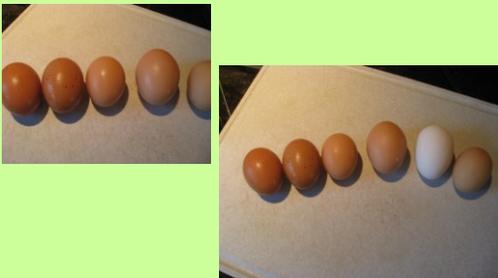
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6j13-9Pexw> Virtual + Chicken SD

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Brown and White Chicken Eggs



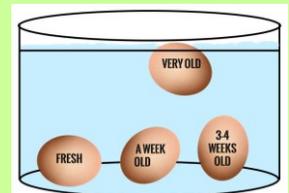
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Fresh?

- Check with a bowl of water
- Candle (shine a light through the egg in a dark place, like a closet)
- Mark your egg cartons



- No rooster? = Eggs won't rot, just dry out.

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Dirty Eggs

To wash or not to wash:

- A dry egg is safer than a wet egg
- Never just cold water
- Never water & soap, unless you are using the egg immediately
- Sanitizer in water
- Sandpaper

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Dirty Eggs?

Dirty eggs come from dirty nesting boxes

- Put down more footing, such as wood chips or sand, to keep your hens' feet clean
- Put fresh bedding in your nesting boxes

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Raising Chicks

- Heat - 95° for first week
 - Decrease temp by 5° every week
- Food & water
- No drafts
- Protection from cats, rats & weasels

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Heat for chicks

Chicks are hatched with 3 days of yolk still inside their bodies, so...

- They can survive for a couple days without food and water, but
- They will die of hypothermia within hours without heat

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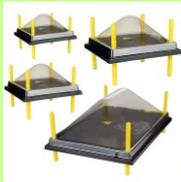
Heat for chicks

Three common heat sources:

- Mother hen
- Heat lamb – 250 watts, red bulb
- Brooder heat plate – 15-66 watts



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Heat for Chicks

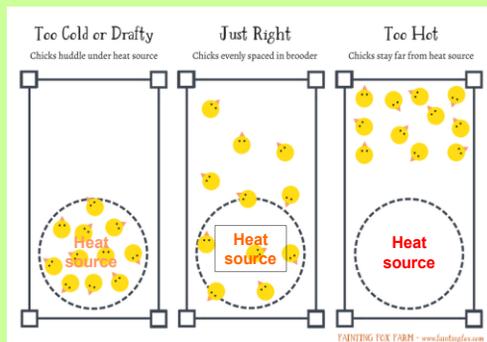
As chicks grow feathers they gradually need less heat.

- Heat - 95° for first week
 - Decrease temp by 5° every week
 - By raising the heat source up higher
- You can use a thermometer, BUT a more accurate measure is whether the chicks are comfortable

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Too cold vs too hot

These chicks are too cold.



Raising Happy Chickens



These chicks are staying as far from the heat source as they can get.

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Chick feed

Chick starter crumble

- Higher protein than for adults – 19-21%
- Smaller pieces for tiny beaks
- Keep it clean and dry
- Use some sort of cover or set-up so the chicks can't poop in their feeders

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Water for chicks

- Keep it clean!
- Chicks survive much better if they have electrolytes, vitamins, and minerals added to their water
- Most hatcheries and feed stores sell packages

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Chick Set-Up



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My duckling set-up



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Free-ranging Chickens



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What is your purpose for having chickens?

- **Pets and Pleasure**
 - Long-lived calm breeds, and either hardy or needing extra care
- **Family Food – for eggs or meat**
 - Good layers, standard-sized
- **Fertilizer and Pest-control**
 - Hardy & Easy-care

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Questions?

Thank You!

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