

WALNUT CREEK SUPPLY

THE COMPLETE CARE GUIDE

Backyard Poultry

Brooders, coops, layers and keeping your flock safe



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New owner? Go straight to Section 1. It is written so you can set up a safe, correct home and get through the first 48 hours without reading anything else first.

*Few animals on a homestead give back as quickly as a backyard flock. A handful of hens will turn kitchen scraps, garden bugs, and a little clean feed into breakfast, fertilizer, and a whole lot of entertainment, and ducks and quail can do the same in a smaller footprint. Here in Lancaster County, a coop behind the house is about as ordinary as a garden bed, and our own family grows its food the same way: a few hens, a few vegetable rows, and an orchard that keeps us humble. But chickens are livestock with real needs, not lawn ornaments. Chicks start life in a heated box called a **brooder**; they grow into young hens called **pullets**; adult egg-laying hens are called **layers**; and birds raised for meat are called **broilers**. Each one has different needs, and each one can be a joy when you get the basics right. This guide covers all three, starting with chickens and adding short notes on ducks and quail where their needs differ. Read the Quick Start first, check your local rules before you order a single chick, and have the brooder running before anything is shipped.*

SECTION 1

Quick Start: Your First 48 Hours

1. **Set up the brooder and run it for 24 hours before the chicks arrive.** A brooder is a draft-free, heated, secure box where chicks live for their first weeks. A large plastic tote, stock tank, or sturdy cardboard-sided pen works, with a lid or screen on top because chicks fly short distances sooner than you'd expect. Allow roughly **half a square foot per chick** at first and plan to expand as they grow.
2. **Hit 95°F, measured at chick height.** Week one needs **95°F** directly under the heat source, with a cooler side of the brooder they can walk to. Place a thermometer at chick level (not hanging up near the heater) and confirm the number before anyone moves in. Avoid traditional heat lamps where you can; they are a leading cause of coop and barn fires.
3. **Lay down dry, grippy bedding.** Use a thick layer of **pine shavings** (never cedar for chicks). For the first two days, many keepers cover the shavings with textured paper towels so brand-new chicks can't mistake bedding for food. Do not use slick newspaper alone; chicks' legs can splay out on slippery surfaces and develop a permanent deformity called spraddle leg.
4. **Fill a shallow waterer and a feeder, and teach every chick to drink.** Fill the waterer with room-temperature water a few hours ahead so it's not cold. When chicks arrive, gently dip each beak into the water once so they learn where it is. Use a chick waterer with a narrow, shallow trough (add clean marbles or pebbles to the trough if your chicks are very small so nobody drowns). Water is the first priority, ahead of food.
5. **Offer chick starter feed.** Use a complete chick **starter at about 18 to 20% protein**. Chicks eat constantly and store food in the **crop**, a soft pouch at the base of the neck that holds food before it moves on to digestion. A full, rounded crop at the end of the day means you're on the right track.
6. **Read the chicks, not just the thermometer.** Chicks huddled tightly under the heat and peeping loudly are cold. Chicks spread to the far edges, panting with wings held away from the body, are too hot. Chicks scattered evenly, eating, drinking, and napping in little piles are just right.
7. **Check every vent.** The **vent** is the single opening under the tail that chicks use for droppings (and, later, eggs). If droppings are caked over it, a condition called pasty butt, gently soften it with a warm damp cloth, pat it dry, and check again in a few hours. Check every chick, every day, for the first week.
8. **Handle gently, wash your hands every time, and keep chicks away from the kitchen.** Poultry of every age can carry **Salmonella** without looking sick. Wash with soap for 20 seconds after touching chicks, bedding, or equipment. Do not kiss or snuggle birds, and keep brooders out of food-prep areas.
9. **Start good biosecurity from day one.** **Biosecurity** simply means the habits that keep disease out of your flock: dedicated boots, clean hands, covered feed, and limited contact with wild birds. One disease in particular makes this important: **HPAI (highly pathogenic avian influenza, or bird flu)**. You'll find the full plan in the Handling & Biosecurity section.

10. **Plan the coop now, because chicks outgrow the brooder in 4 to 8 weeks.** Pick the site, finalize the size (roughly 4 square feet per bird inside, 10 in the run), and have a predator-proof, ready-to-use coop before the chicks are fully feathered. Then call your township office to confirm that you're allowed to keep a flock at all.

First-Time Starter Bundle

What needs to be in the house before the chicks arrive, and what to look for in each category.

Essentials

- **A brooder container with a secure top** — large enough to give chicks room to spread out, tall enough to keep them in as they begin to hop, and easy to wipe clean. Smooth sides with no gaps are best.
- **A safe heat source with an adjustable setup** — a radiant heat plate (which warms chicks from above like a mother hen) is the safer choice, or a brooder heater with a protected element. Whatever you choose, it should be securely mounted and sized to the brooder.
- **Two thermometers** — one at chick level under the heat and one on the cool side, so you can see the gradient and confirm the numbers.
- **Pine shavings** — large-flake, kiln-dried, and low in dust. Plus a few rolls of textured paper towels or a non-slip liner for the first two days.
- **A chick starter feed (about 18 to 20% protein)** — a complete feed with a clear ingredient panel. No mystery ingredients. Ask your hatchery or feed supplier whether your chicks were vaccinated against coccidiosis, because that determines whether you want a medicated or unmedicated starter.
- **A chick feeder and a chick waterer** — sized for small beaks, shallow enough that chicks can't drown, and with a design that keeps droppings and shavings out.
- **Chick grit** — fine insoluble grit, kept in a separate dish, for any day chicks eat anything besides their complete feed.
- **An electrolyte and vitamin powder for water** — useful for the first few days, especially for mail-order chicks who've just been through shipping stress.
- **A basic first-aid kit** — gauze, a saline wound wash, a poultry-safe antiseptic, a small pair of blunt scissors, and disposable gloves.
- **Dedicated boots or shoes and a hand soap station** — start the biosecurity habit now.

Ready to set up? Browse the essentials in our collections: [Hen Houses](#), [Coops & Poultry Housing](#) and [Poultry Bird Feeders Waterers and other supplies](#).

Enrichment

- **A low perch** — a small, sturdy branch or dowel a couple of inches off the brooder floor. Chicks start practicing roosting in their first week or two, and it builds leg strength and good habits.
- **A shallow dust-bath tray** — a low tray of clean sand and a little fine dirt, offered from the second week on. Dust bathing is how chickens keep their feathers clean and manage external parasites.
- **Hanging greens** — chopped tender greens (clover, dandelion, lettuce, or chickweed) offered in small amounts after the first week, with grit alongside.
- **A hide or shelter** — a small cardboard box or low half-tunnel in the cool side of the brooder gives shy chicks a place to retreat.

Enrichment, one click away. Shop Backyard Chicken Supplies.

SECTION 2

Meet Your Flock

Domestic chickens (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) descend from the red junglefowl of Southeast Asia, a forest-edge bird that scratches, forages, dust-bathes, roosts in trees at night, and lives in a pecking order of its own making. Everything about good chicken keeping comes back to letting a chicken do those things safely. Give a hen room to scratch, a high place to sleep, dry dirt to bathe in, and a coop that is locked up tight at dusk, and she will repay you with eggs, pest control, and a surprising amount of personality.

Trait	Detail
Common name	Chicken (hen = adult female, rooster = adult male, pullet = female under about 1 year, cockerel = young male)
Native range	Red junglefowl of South and Southeast Asia; domesticated for thousands of years
Chick to laying age	Most laying breeds begin at roughly 18 to 24 weeks; heavy breeds can take longer
Laying lifespan	Productive for about 2 to 3 years at peak ; slows after that
Total lifespan	5 to 8+ years for laying hens kept as pets or homestead flock
Eggs per year	250 to 300 in year one for a good layer, declining each year; breed matters
Activity pattern	Diurnal. Active in daylight, roosts at dusk
Social structure	Flock animals with a pecking order. Never keep just one
Temperament	Varies by breed from calm and chatty to flighty and bossy
Diet	Omnivores. Seeds, greens, insects, and a complete feed as the foundation

Choosing your birds — layers, dual-purpose, and broilers

Hatcheries and feed stores sort chickens into three broad groups. **Layers** are bred for egg production and tend to be lighter, leaner, and more active. **Dual-purpose** breeds are heavier and lay a respectable number of eggs, so they can fill a freezer as well as an egg basket. **Broilers** are bred to grow very fast for meat. The numbers below are typical ranges for healthy birds in good conditions; individual hens vary.

Breed	Type	Eggs per year (typical)	Egg color	Temperament	Notes
White Leghorn	Layer	280–320	White	Active, flighty	Lean, efficient, and heat tolerant; not a lap chicken
Golden Comet or similar production hybrid	Layer	250–300+	Brown	Friendly, easygoing	Very productive early on, with production that drops faster in later years
Australorp	Layer / dual-purpose	220–280	Brown	Calm, gentle	Reliable winter layer with a good record for friendly dispositions
Rhode Island Red	Dual-purpose	200–280	Brown	Hardy, sometimes bossy	Tough, forgiving, and a good first breed; may bully milder hens

Breed	Type	Eggs per year (typical)	Egg color	Temperament	Notes
Barred Plymouth Rock	Dual-purpose	200–280	Brown	Calm, curious	A classic family flock bird; cold hardy
Easter Egger	Layer	200–250	Blue, green, or olive	Friendly, varies	Colorful eggs; a mixed-breed type, so traits vary
Brahma	Dual-purpose (heavy)	150–200	Brown	Very gentle	Giant, feathered-footed, great in cold; needs more space
Cornish Cross	Broiler	Not a laying bird	Brown (rarely)	Placid, sedentary	Ready in 6–10 weeks; fragile if kept longer
Slow-growing meat hybrids (Freedom Ranger types)	Broiler	Not a laying bird	N/A	Active foragers	Ready in about 10–14 weeks; sturdier on pasture

Egg color is determined by breed, not by the quality of the egg or what the hen eats. White, brown, blue, and green shells are nutritionally the same inside.

How long they live and how many eggs to expect

A well-bred laying hen peaks in her first year and then slows by roughly 10 to 20% each year after. Production tapers rather than switching off, and the eggs get larger. Expect about 250 to 300 eggs in year one, roughly 200 to 250 in year two, and 150 to 225 in year three, with occasional eggs after that. Many backyard hens live well past their laying years, so decide before you bring chicks home whether your flock includes retirees. Our own flock gets to be old.

Broilers versus laying hens

This is the single biggest decision in poultry keeping, because the birds are built very differently.

- **Laying hens** grow slowly, reach laying age in about five months, and live for years. They need layer feed, nest boxes, roosts, and a long-term home.
- **Cornish Cross broilers** are bred to put on weight at astonishing speed. They are normally processed at **6 to 10 weeks** and are not built to live much longer. Kept past that point, they can suffer leg failure, heart failure, and fluid buildup in the abdomen. They eat a higher-protein ration, tend to lie about rather than forage, and make a great deal of waste, so their housing needs frequent attention.
- **Slow-growing meat hybrids and heritage dual-purpose birds** take about 10 to 14 weeks or longer, forage actively, and are a gentler path for first-time meat raisers.

Never keep Cornish Cross birds as a long-term pet flock with laying hens. Different timeline, different feed, different housing, and a very different relationship with your pen.

A note on ducks

Ducks (usually Pekin, Khaki Campbell, Indian Runner, Cayuga, or Muscovy for backyard use) are hardy, cheerful, and wonderful foragers, especially for slugs and garden pests. They usually live **8 to 12 years**, and productive layers like Khaki Campbells and Runners can lay **150 to 300 eggs a year**. They need more water than chickens do: a deep tub or small pool for dunking their whole bill and head (which they do to keep their eyes and nostrils clear), and they splash all day long. Keep their bedding exceptionally

dry and expect a muddy yard around water. Ducks do not roost or use nest boxes, so they need floor space and a low, easy entrance with a gentle ramp rather than a high ladder. Give them roughly **4 square feet per bird inside** and **10 to 15 square feet per bird in the run**. Some breeds are quiet (Muscovies), while others (Pekins, for example) are surprisingly loud.

A note on quail

Coturnix quail are small, quick-maturing, and very space-efficient, which makes them popular with homesteaders in tight quarters. They live **2 to 3 years**, begin laying at about **6 to 8 weeks**, and lay roughly **200 to 300 small eggs a year**. They are ground birds that startle upward, so they need a low-ceilinged, well-ventilated, fully covered hutch or aviary with a solid roof (they can hurt themselves flying into a high ceiling), plus roughly **1 square foot per bird** as an absolute minimum. They need higher protein than chickens (about 20 to 24% as adults, and 24 to 28% as chicks, from a game bird feed). Some states and localities restrict quail, so check before buying.

Trait	Chickens	Ducks	Quail
Typical lifespan	5–8+ years	8–12 years	2–3 years
Eggs per year	250–300 (year one, good layer)	150–300 depending on breed	200–300 small eggs
Space inside, per bird	About 4 sq ft	About 4 sq ft	About 1 sq ft minimum
Run space, per bird	About 10 sq ft	10–15 sq ft	1–2 sq ft in a covered pen
Roosting	Yes, needs roosts	No, sleeps on the floor	No, floor-dwelling
Water needs	Drinking water	Drinking water plus a splash tub	Drinking water
Feed protein (adult)	About 16%	About 16–18%	About 20–24%
Noise	Moderate; hens "egg song"	Can be loud (females quack)	Quiet; roosters crow softly

Roosters

You do not need a rooster to get eggs. Hens lay eggs whether or not a rooster is present; a rooster simply makes those eggs fertile. A rooster protects the flock and keeps the peace, but he also crows (often starting before dawn), may be banned by local ordinances, and some turn aggressive. If you keep one, raise him with calm handling, avoid wrestling or hand-feeding him as a cockerel, never turn your back on him, and plan on roughly **one rooster for every 8 to 10 hens** so he does not wear out a small group. Check your noise ordinance first.

Legal checks — before you buy a single chick

Rules vary by township, county, and state, and even by neighborhood. Before you order:

- **Zoning.** Many residential zones prohibit livestock, limit flock sizes, or require a minimum lot size.
- **HOA covenants.** These can be stricter than the town and cannot be overridden by it.
- **Permits and setbacks.** Many places require a permit and a minimum distance between the coop and property lines or neighboring houses.
- **Rooster, noise, and nuisance ordinances.** Often separate from the flock rules.
- **Egg and meat sales.** Selling eggs or meat usually triggers state and local rules on labeling, refrigeration, and inspection.
- **Neighbors.** A friendly conversation (and a dozen eggs now and then) goes a long way.

Call your township or city office, then put the answer in writing.

What surprises new owners

Three things catch most first-time keepers off guard. The first is **how fast chicks grow**: from a fluffy handful to a gawky teenager in a few weeks, and then to a fully feathered pullet that needs the coop, not the brooder. The second is **the pecking order**: chickens are social, and a bit of chasing and squabbling is normal, while a persistent bully or a bleeding hen is not. The third is **how much personality they have**: hens recognize you, follow you around the yard, come running for treats, and develop clear favorites. It is hard to stay detached about animals that greet you at the gate.

SECTION 3

Coop, Run & Predator Proofing

Every predator in Lancaster County knows what a chicken is. Foxes, raccoons, weasels, hawks, owls, loose dogs, coyotes, rats, and snakes all treat an unsecured coop as a buffet, and most flocks that are lost are lost in a single night. The rules below are not luxuries. They are the difference between a flock and a lesson.

The size rule: plan roughly **4 square feet per bird inside the coop** and **10 square feet per bird in the run**, with more for large breeds and less for bantams (miniature chickens). More space means less bullying, less ammonia, and healthier birds.

The layout, drawn out

Picture the whole setup from above, with the run on the south side so winter sun reaches the pen. This layout is sized for **six hens**; scale it up by the per-bird numbers above.

Zone (label on the drawing)	Size for six hens	Where it goes	Key details
Coop (enclosed house)	4 ft × 6 ft = 24 sq ft	North end of the layout, floor raised 12–18 inches off the ground	Solid walls and roof; sealed, washable floor; human-size door on the side for cleaning
Roost bar	6 ft long (8–12 inches per bird = 4–6 ft minimum)	Along the back wall inside the coop, about 18–24 inches above the floor and higher than the nest boxes	A flat 2×4 laid wide side up lets birds cover their toes in winter; rounded edges; spaced a foot from the wall
Droppings board	Under the roost, 6 ft long	Directly below the roost bar	A removable tray or sheet that catches droppings for a quick daily scrape
Nest boxes	2 boxes (one per 3–4 hens), each about 12 × 12 × 12 inches	Along the side wall, lower than the roost, with a perch landing bar in front	Dim, quiet, and filled with a few inches of clean bedding; reachable from outside for easy egg collection
Pop door (chicken door)	About 12 inches wide × 14 inches tall	South wall of the coop, opening to a ramp	Closes tight at night; ramp has cleats for traction; ideal with an automatic door
Ventilation openings	About 1 sq ft per bird (a safe starting point)	High on the walls, well above the roost, on at least two sides	Covered in 1/2-inch hardware cloth; open year-round so humid air escapes without blowing on sleeping birds
Run (outdoor pen)	6 ft × 10 ft = 60 sq ft	South of the coop, attached to the pop door	Fenced on all sides and roofed; covered area for rain and shade
Skirt or buried fence	12 inches buried, or a 24-inch apron laid outward	Around the whole outer perimeter of the run and coop	1/2-inch hardware cloth; defeats diggers
Dust-bath area	About 2 ft × 2 ft	Inside the dry, covered part of the run	A bin or patch of dry, loose sand and dirt
Feeder and waterer	One of each, hung or raised	Under the covered part of the run or inside the coop	Kept dry; waterer away from the roost to protect the bedding

The coop interior

Roosts and nest boxes. Chickens sleep perched, side by side, and they want to sleep as high as they can. Make sure roosts are the highest thing in the coop, or hens will sleep in the nest boxes and soil them. Give each bird **8 to 12 inches of roost space**, and provide **one nest box for every 3 to 4 hens**. (Hens will often crowd into one favorite box anyway.)

Ventilation without drafts. Chickens breathe out a lot of moisture and ammonia from their droppings. Good ventilation means open vents **high up, above roost height**, so stale air leaves the coop without a breeze blowing across the birds at night. A coop that smells sharp or feels damp needs more ventilation, not less, even in winter.

Dry and easy to clean. A sealed, washable floor (vinyl, sealed plywood, or concrete) makes cleaning ten times faster. Keep rain, snow, and roof leaks out, and make the human-size door big enough to reach every corner.

The run and predator-proofing rules

- **Use 1/2-inch hardware cloth, not chicken wire.** Chicken wire keeps chickens in; it does not keep predators out. Raccoons reach through it, weasels squeeze through it, and many animals simply tear it. Hardware cloth is a welded wire mesh that holds up. Cover every window, vent, and gap with it, and fasten it with screws and washers rather than staples.
- **Use real locks.** A raccoon can open a simple hook or slide bolt in minutes. Use two-step latches, a carabiner clip, or a lock that needs two separate motions to open.
- **Defeat diggers.** Foxes, dogs, and coyotes dig under fences. Bury the hardware cloth 12 inches deep, or lay a 24-inch apron of it flat on the ground outward from the base of the fence and cover it with soil or gravel.
- **Cover the top.** Hawks and owls hunt from above. Roof the run with solid roofing, hardware cloth, or sturdy welded wire (bird netting alone is not strong enough against a determined raccoon or a hawk).
- **Close the coop every night.** Chickens return to roost at dusk on their own. Shut the pop door once they're all inside (count heads), or use an automatic door that opens and closes on a schedule.
- **Remove the attraction.** Store feed in metal containers with tight lids, pick up eggs daily, and clean up spilled feed so rats and raccoons have less reason to visit.
- **Free-ranging.** If your hens range in the yard, do it in daylight, with you nearby, and with shade and cover to run to. A supervised hour is safer than an unsupervised day.

SECTION 4

Bedding & Brooder Guide

Chicks live in the brooder for their first weeks, and the bedding you choose affects their footing, their lungs, and how often you clean. Adults need bedding too: a few inches of dry material on the coop floor to soak up moisture and make cleaning easy.

Bedding	Best for	Performance	Notes
Pine shavings (large-flake, kiln-dried)	Chicks, adults, ducklings	Absorbent, soft underfoot, and low in dust; the most common choice	Avoid fine, dusty shavings; keep it dry and refresh when damp
Textured paper towels over a dry base	Chicks, first 2 days only	Gives grip and keeps chicks from eating shavings before they know what's food	Replace with shavings after day 2 or 3
Non-slip rubber shelf liner	Under the bedding in the brooder	Provides traction and prevents splayed legs	Wash and dry between batches
Hemp bedding	Adults (and chicks)	Highly absorbent, low-dust, and composts well	Higher cost; excellent for deep litter
Clean straw	Adult coop and nest boxes	Cozy, inexpensive, and good for nests	Not ideal for chicks (they may eat it; it holds moisture); must be kept dry and mold-free
Coarse construction sand	Adult coop floor and run	Dries quickly, easy to scoop like a litter box	Cold in winter; not for chicks
Cedar shavings	Avoid	Aromatic oils can irritate the respiratory tract	Never use for chicks; avoid for adults
Newspaper alone	Avoid	Slick; can cause spraddle leg; poor absorbency	Fine under other bedding, not as the surface
Moldy straw or hay	Avoid outright	Mold spores can cause serious lung infections	Discard any bedding with a musty smell

Avoid outright: cedar shavings, slick newspaper as the only surface, any moldy or damp bedding, fine sawdust (breathing hazard), shavings from treated or painted wood, and clumping cat litter (swells if eaten).

The brooder temperature schedule

Chicks cannot regulate their own body heat for the first few weeks, so the brooder does it for them. Start at **95°F in week one** and reduce the temperature by about **5°F each week** until you reach about **70°F, or until the chicks are fully feathered**, whichever comes first. Always provide a cool side of the brooder so chicks can step away from the heat.

Chick age	Target temperature under the heat source	What to look for
Week 1	95°F	Chicks scattered, active, eating and drinking
Week 2	90°F	Wing feathers coming in; more movement and play
Week 3	85°F	Starting to hop, perch, and scratch
Week 4	80°F	Feathering well; the brooder is likely too small now
Week 5	75°F	Mostly feathered; begin short outdoor visits on mild days

Chick age	Target temperature under the heat source	What to look for
Week 6 and beyond	70°F or fully feathered	Ready to move to the coop if the weather allows

Chicks that are fully feathered can often go to the coop at about **6 to 8 weeks**, once nighttime temperatures are in line with what they've been used to. Introduce them gradually to the outdoors, and check that the coop is predator-proof before the first night. Ducklings usually feather more slowly and often need the brooder a little longer; they are also very messy, with wet droppings and splashing water, so bedding needs changing more often. Quail chicks follow a similar curve but are tiny, so use a smaller-mesh cover and shallower dishes.

SECTION 5

Heat, Light & Water — The 3 Numbers

Three simple numbers decide whether most flocks thrive. Check them every day.

Parameter	Target value	How to measure it	What goes wrong when it's off
Brooder heat (chicks)	95°F in week 1, dropping about 5°F per week to about 70°F or fully feathered	A thermometer at chick level under the heat source, plus a second on the cool side; watch chick behavior	Too cold: huddling, piling, chilled or dead chicks, pasty butt. Too hot: panting, scattering, dehydration, poor growth
Adult comfort range	Dry and draft-free year-round; shade and airflow above about 85°F	A max/min thermometer in the coop; observe hens	Heat: panting, wings held out, drops in egg production, death in extreme cases. Cold plus damp: frostbitten combs and toes
Light (layers)	About 14–16 hours of light per day for steady production	A timer on a low-wattage bulb to extend the natural day; count daylight hours	Under about 12 hours: production slows or stops, which is natural. Sudden changes or all-night light: stress and strange laying patterns
Water	Clean, cool (or unfrozen), available 24/7; a hen drinks roughly a pint a day, more in heat	Check waterers at least twice daily; lift and weigh if unsure	Without water, a hen stops laying quickly and can die within a day or two in the heat; dirty water spreads disease

Light — why 14 to 16 hours matters

Hens lay in response to day length. In late fall and winter, as the days shorten below about 12 hours, many hens slow down or stop laying for a while. This is a natural rest. If you want steady winter eggs, add a low-wattage light on a timer in the **early morning** so total light reaches **14 to 16 hours**, and keep the schedule steady. Many keepers choose not to add light and give the hens a winter rest, which is also perfectly healthy. Pullets raised to lay should not be given extra light until they are about 18 weeks old, to avoid bringing them into lay before their bodies are ready.

Water — the most overlooked number

A chicken can skip a meal with little harm, but not water. Keep it clean, in the shade in summer, and ice-free in winter. The waterer guide is in the Diet & Nutrition section.

SECTION 6

Diet & Nutrition



Complete feed for the bird's age, oyster shell for laying hens, grit when they eat anything beyond the feed, and treats kept to a small portion.

Chickens are **omnivores**, which means they eat plants, seeds, and animals (mostly insects, worms, and the occasional unlucky frog). In the backyard, the foundation of the diet is a **complete feed**, a formulated ration that already contains the protein, vitamins, and minerals a bird needs. We pick feeds the way we pick everything: **no mystery ingredients**, a clear label, and **Clean Fuel, No Junk**. Everything else is the extra.

Feed by age

Feed needs change as birds grow. Switching too early or too late affects growth, laying, and bone health.

Age	Feed type	Protein	Notes
Hatch to about 6–8 weeks	Chick starter (crumble)	About 18–20%	Medicated starter helps prevent coccidiosis, a gut parasite. Skip medicated feed if chicks were vaccinated for coccidiosis
About 6–8 weeks to 18–20 weeks	Grower (or "grower/developer")	About 15–18%	Supports steady frame growth; no extra calcium yet, which can harm young pullets' kidneys

Age	Feed type	Protein	Notes
About 18–20 weeks and beyond	Layer feed	About 16%	Contains added calcium for eggshells; start as the first eggs approach
Adult, non-laying (roosters, young males, retired hens)	All-flock or grower feed with oyster shell on the side	About 14–16%	Layer feed's calcium level is too high for non-layers
Broilers (Cornish Cross)	Broiler starter, then finisher	About 20–23% (starter), 18–20% (finisher)	Higher protein to fuel rapid growth; manage feed access carefully to protect legs and heart
Ducklings	Non-medicated starter, with added niacin	About 18–20%	Medicated chick starter is not recommended for waterfowl without guidance from your vet; offer water alongside feed at all times
Adult ducks	Waterfowl, all-flock, or layer feed	About 16–18%	Layer feed with extra calcium during laying
Quail chicks and adults	Game bird feed	About 24–28% (chicks), 20–24% (adults)	Higher protein than chicken feed

Always check the feed bag for the intended age and species. Chicken feed that's labeled for a different life stage may be missing something your birds need.

Ducklings and niacin. Ducklings grow quickly and need more **niacin** (a B vitamin) than chicks to develop strong legs. A shortage can cause bowed or weak legs. Choose a waterfowl starter, or add brewer's yeast (a common source of niacin) to a non-medicated chick starter, and ask your vet or feed supplier about amounts. Because ducklings gulp food and need water to swallow it, **never leave feed out without water nearby.**

Calcium, oyster shell, and grit

These two supplements sound similar and do completely different jobs.

Calcium and oyster shell. An egg shell is almost pure calcium, and a hen lays down a lot of it. Layer feed contains calcium, and we also offer **crushed oyster shell in a separate dish, free choice**, so each hen can take what she needs. Start layer feed and oyster shell at about **18 to 20 weeks**, when the first eggs are near. Don't feed layer feed to young chicks or to roosters as their only ration; too much calcium can harm their kidneys.

Grit. Chickens have no teeth. Instead, they swallow small stones called **grit** that sit in a muscular organ called the **gizzard** and grind food. If your birds eat only complete crumble or pellets, they need little or no extra grit. If they eat anything else (greens, scratch, kitchen scraps, or free-range forage), they need **insoluble grit** (small granite stones) available at all times. Free-ranging birds often pick up their own, but offering a dish costs almost nothing and prevents trouble.

Treats, scratch, and kitchen scraps

Treats are where chicken keepers have the most fun, and where flocks most often get into trouble. The rule is simple: **treats and scratch grains should be no more than about 10% of the diet.** Fill up on treats, and your hens skip the complete feed that supplies balanced nutrition, which can lead to thin eggshells, weight problems, and weaker birds.

- **Good treats:** leafy greens, cabbage heads hung on a string, squash and pumpkin (including the seeds), cucumbers, berries, melon rinds, cooked eggs scrambled, mealworms, black soldier fly larvae, and garden trimmings that you know are free of

sprays.

- **Scratch grains** (a mix of cracked corn and other grains) are best thought of as candy. Toss a little in the afternoon so hens spend time foraging, and in winter a small handful helps keep them warm through the night.
- **Free-ranging** adds bugs, grass, and variety, though it doesn't replace the complete feed.

Toxic and avoid-outright foods

The list is shorter than people fear, but these are worth taping inside the feed room door.

Food	Verdict	Why
Avocado (pit and skin especially)	Never	Contains persin, which can be toxic to birds
Chocolate and cocoa	Never	Contains theobromine, which is toxic
Raw dry beans (especially kidney beans)	Never	Contain a natural toxin (hemagglutinin) that is destroyed only by thorough cooking
Green or sprouted potato skins and nightshade leaves	Never	Contain solanine, a toxin
Moldy, rotten, or spoiled food	Never	Mold toxins can cause serious illness and death
Very salty food (chips, bacon, processed meats)	Avoid	Excess salt can cause salt poisoning and dehydration
Rhubarb leaves, raw or uncooked	Never	Contain oxalic acid, which is toxic
Onions in large quantities	Avoid	Can cause anemia; tiny amounts are not a concern, but don't make them a treat
Dairy in quantity	Limit	Chickens are not good at digesting lactose; a small spoon of yogurt is fine, a bowl of milk is not
Pesticide- or herbicide-treated plants and grass	Never	Chemical residues can poison birds and show up in eggs

When in doubt, leave it out.

Water — the waterer guide

Water is the most important nutrient. Chickens drink roughly a pint a day, more in heat, and need it **clean and available 24 hours a day**. The right waterer makes this easy.

Waterer type	Best for	Pros	Cons
Hanging waterer	Adult flocks; keeps water clean	Raised to back height, so bedding and droppings stay out; easy to refill	Needs daily washing; can freeze in winter without a heater
Nipple waterer	Adult flocks and older chicks	Very clean, since water stays sealed until birds peck the nipple; low maintenance	Birds must be trained to use it; check nipples for blockage and freezing
Heated waterer (or heated base)	Winter	Prevents freezing so water stays available	Needs a safe outdoor power source; follow the manufacturer's instructions
Chick-size shallow waterer	Brooder (first weeks)	Small trough lets chicks drink without drowning	Needs frequent cleaning because it fouls quickly

Waterer type	Best for	Pros	Cons
Open pan or bowl	Ducks (with care)	Lets ducks dunk their bills	Fouls quickly; position carefully so bedding stays dry

Water tips: Wash waterers with hot soapy water at least weekly (more in warm weather) to prevent slime and algae. Keep them in the shade in summer. Raise them to the height of the birds' backs to keep bedding out. And for ducks, put a deep tub nearby so they can dunk their heads, which helps them keep their eyes and nostrils clear.

Shop the food and supplies: Browse Poultry Birds.

SECTION 7

Eggs, Molting & Seasonal Care

Eggs

A hen typically lays one egg about every 24 to 26 hours, so even a good layer will skip a day now and then. Most hens lay in the morning to early afternoon.

- **Collect daily.** Twice a day is even better in hot or very cold weather. Frequent collection keeps eggs clean, prevents breakage, discourages egg eating, and reduces the temptation for a hen to go broody (sit on a clutch).
- **Wash only if needed.** A freshly laid egg has a natural protective coating called the **bloom** that helps keep out bacteria. If an egg is lightly soiled, brush or wipe it off with a dry cloth or fine sandpaper; if you must wash an egg, use **warm running water** (warmer than the egg) and dry it right away. Do not soak eggs, and don't use cold water, which can pull bacteria through the shell. Once you wash an egg, refrigerate it.
- **Refrigerate for the longest freshness.** Unwashed eggs with the bloom intact can sit on the counter for a short while, but refrigerating them keeps them fresh longer and is the safest approach, especially if you've washed them. Store them pointed-end down.
- **Try the freshness test.** Place an egg in a bowl of cool water. A very fresh egg lies flat on its side; one that's a week or two old stands at an angle; an egg that floats is old and should be discarded.
- **Practice Salmonella hygiene.** Even clean-looking eggs and clean-looking hens can carry Salmonella. Discard cracked eggs, wash your hands after handling eggs or birds, cook eggs thoroughly (especially for young children, older adults, and anyone with a weakened immune system), and keep eggs refrigerated.

Molting

Molting is the yearly process in which a hen drops her old feathers and grows a new set. It usually happens in late summer or fall, around the time the days shorten, and often begins in a hen's second fall. A molting hen may look scruffy and half-naked for 8 to 16 weeks, and egg laying slows or **stops completely** while she puts her energy into feathers, which are mostly protein.

- **Offer extra protein.** Switch to a higher-protein feed (about 18 to 20%, such as a grower or all-flock feed) while the flock is molting, and offer a few treats like mealworms or scrambled eggs. Keep oyster shell available.
- **Handle gently.** New pin feathers are sensitive and can bleed if bumped.
- **Keep her warm and dry.** Plan for extra shelter during cold snaps.
- **Do not mistake molting for illness.** A molting hen is thin on feathers, but she still eats, moves, and acts normally. A hen who is bald, sluggish, and not eating needs a closer look.

Summer — heat stress

Chickens do not sweat, and heavy feathering makes it hard to shed heat. Above about **85°F**, watch for panting, wings held away from the body, pale combs, and listlessness.

- Provide **deep shade** in the run all day.
- Offer **cool, fresh water** in several places; add ice, and put out frozen treats like watermelon.
- Make sure the coop has **plenty of high ventilation** and open vents.
- Avoid handling birds during the hottest part of the day.

Winter — frostbite and cold care

Healthy, fully feathered chickens handle cold surprisingly well. The bigger winter danger is **damp air**, which leads to frostbite on combs, wattles, and toes.

- Keep the coop **dry**. Wet bedding and condensation are the enemy.
- Provide **ventilation, not drafts**. High vents stay open; bird-level drafts don't.
- Use **wide, flat roosts** (a 2×4 laid flat) so birds can cover their toes with their feathers at night. Low roosts help birds with large combs.
- Consider petroleum jelly on large combs and wattles on the coldest nights.
- Provide **unfrozen water** and a little extra scratch before dusk.
- **Avoid heat lamps where possible**. Heat lamps are a leading cause of coop fires, and chickens that are acclimated to the cold generally don't need them. If you must provide supplemental heat for a particular situation, use a safer radiant panel with a thermostat and secure it carefully.

SECTION 8

Common Challenges & Solutions

Mites and lice

What you see: hens that scratch and preen constantly, dull or ragged feathers, pale combs, scabby skin around the vent, tiny crawling specks on feathers, or (with red mites) bloody smears on roosts and birds that avoid the coop at night. **Why:** external parasites that live on the birds or in coop cracks and thrive in dirty, damp conditions. **What to do:** inspect birds at night with a flashlight, clean and dry the coop thoroughly, replace bedding, keep dust-bathing areas available, and treat birds and coop with a poultry-safe product following the label. **When to call a vet:** severe pale combs, weakness, or lack of improvement after a week of treatment.

Coccidiosis

What you see: bloody or watery droppings, hunched fluffed-up chicks, lethargy, and poor appetite, most often in birds under about 12 weeks. **Why:** a microscopic gut parasite that spreads through wet litter and contaminated droppings. **What to do:** keep brooder bedding dry, use medicated starter or ask your hatchery about vaccinated chicks, and clean waterers daily. **When to call a vet:** at the first sign of bloody droppings. A vet can confirm the cause and prescribe treatment, and this disease can kill chicks in a day or two.

Marek's disease

What you see: young birds with a leg stretched forward and a leg stretched back (the "splits"), drooping wings, gray or misshapen pupils, weight loss, or sudden death. **Why:** a highly contagious herpesvirus that spreads through feather dander and has no cure. **What to do:** buy chicks vaccinated at hatch, isolate any suspect bird, and keep new birds separate until you know their history. **When to call a vet:** with any paralysis or if more than one young bird is affected, so a vet can confirm the cause.

Respiratory disease

What you see: sneezing, wet or bubbly eyes and nostrils, a rattling or gurgling breath, swollen face, nasal discharge, and reduced eating and laying. **Why:** bacterial, viral, or fungal infections, often triggered by stress, drafts, dusty bedding, ammonia, or newly added birds. **What to do:** isolate the bird, improve ventilation and cleanliness, remove dusty or moldy bedding, and watch the rest of the flock. **When to call a vet:** the same day if several birds are sick or any bird has trouble breathing. Multiple sick birds can also mean HPAI, so see the reporting section.

Egg binding

What you see: a hen that stands upright like a penguin, strains, sits on the floor or in a nest box without producing an egg, looks puffed and tired, and may stop passing droppings. **Why:** an egg stuck in the reproductive tract, often from calcium problems, a very large egg, obesity, or young or old age. **What to do:** move her to a warm, quiet, dark spot and give a lukewarm Epsom salt soak up to her body for 15 to 20 minutes. Do not try to break or pull the egg. **When to call a vet:** if she has not passed the egg within a few hours. An unresolved egg-bound hen can die.

Vent prolapse

What you see: red tissue protruding from the vent, sometimes with an egg attached, often with other hens pecking at it. **Why:** straining from large eggs, obesity, or laying too young or too fast. **What to do:** separate her immediately so other hens cannot peck, gently clean the tissue with warm water, and keep her calm and warm. **When to call a vet:** same day. Prolapse is an emergency and can be fatal quickly, especially if it is pecked.

Bumblefoot

What you see: a limp, a swollen foot pad, and often a dark scab on the bottom of the foot. **Why:** a staph infection that enters through a small cut or scrape, often from rough perches or hard landings. **What to do:** keep the bird on soft clean bedding and lower high roosts to cut down on hard landings. **When to call a vet:** early. Mild cases can be treated, but a deep infection needs a vet's help, including removal of the core and antibiotics.

Sour or impacted crop

What you see: a crop that is still full and squishy or hard in the morning, a sour smell from the beak, lethargy, or loss of appetite. **Why:** long grass, stringy material, or a yeast overgrowth keeping food from moving through, sometimes after sudden diet changes. **What to do:** withhold feed briefly, give clean water, and call your vet before massaging. Never force vomiting. **When to call a vet:** if the crop is still full after 12 to 24 hours, or if the hen seems weak.

Egg eating

What you see: broken shells in the nest, yolk on beaks and in the bedding, and missing eggs. **Why:** accidental breakage that teaches a hen the taste, thin shells from low calcium, boredom, or crowding. **What to do:** collect eggs more often, provide free-choice oyster shell, add enough dark, comfortable nest boxes, and fill a blown-out egg with mustard to deter the culprit. **When to call a vet:** not usually, unless the hens have soft shells for a long period.

Pecking order bullying and feather picking

What you see: chasing and pecking, hens missing feathers on the back, or a bird with bare red patches or open wounds. **Why:** normal pecking order disputes, but also crowding, boredom, too little protein, or too little space. **What to do:** add space, feeders, waterers, and hiding spots; provide enrichment like hanging cabbages and dust baths; and separate any injured bird from the others, as blood draws more pecking. **When to call a vet:** if a hen has deep wounds.

Predators

What you see: missing birds, feathers scattered around the run, a dead bird with the head or crop removed, or a hole dug under the fence. **Why:** a gap in the coop or run, an unlocked latch, or a bird left out after dark. **What to do:** identify the type of entry, then repair using hardware cloth, double-latch locks, and a buried skirt, and always close the coop at dusk. **When to call a vet:** for any injured survivor, and give her a quiet, warm place to recover.

Frostbite and heat stress

What you see: in winter, white, gray, or black patches on combs, wattles, or toes. In summer, panting, open wings, drooling, and lethargy. **Why:** damp, cold air in winter; poor shade, ventilation, and water in summer. **What to do:** in winter, dry the coop and improve ventilation; in summer, give shade, cool water, and airflow. **When to call a vet:** for blackened or dying tissue in winter, and right away in summer if a bird is limp or collapsing.

Wet litter and ammonia

What you see: a sharp smell, damp bedding, watery droppings, or red, irritated eyes and respiratory signs. **Why:** too many birds, leaky waterers, or poor ventilation. **What to do:** remove wet bedding, fix leaks, add vents, and cut the flock size or expand the space. **When to call a vet:** if birds have trouble breathing.

Quick reference

What you see	Likely cause	What to do	Vet urgency
Bloody droppings in a chick	Coccidiosis	Dry bedding; call your vet	Same day
Leg splits, paralysis in a young bird	Marek's disease	Isolate; confirm with vet	Within a day

What you see	Likely cause	What to do	Vet urgency
Upright stance, straining, no egg	Egg binding	Warm soak; keep calm	Same day if not passed within hours
Red tissue at the vent	Vent prolapse	Isolate and clean	Same day
Sneezing, bubbling eyes	Respiratory disease	Isolate; improve air	Same day if several birds are affected
Scratching, pale comb, specks on feathers	Mites or lice	Clean coop; treat birds	If severe
Limp, swollen foot	Bumblefoot	Soft bedding	Early
Hard or sour crop	Crop problem	Withhold feed; vet advice	If persists 12–24 hours

SECTION 9

Handling & Biosecurity

Handling chickens

Birds that are handled gently from a young age tend to become calmer adults. Move slowly, speak softly, and approach from the front, since a chicken's vision is poor directly behind. To pick one up, scoop her gently from below with both hands, hold her wings against her body, and support her chest and feet. Keep handling sessions short; end them before the bird gets stressed. Never carry a chicken by the legs or wings. Children should handle birds seated and supervised, with every person washing their hands afterward. Make **Salmonella** hygiene automatic: wash hands for 20 seconds after touching birds, eggs, or equipment, keep coop shoes outside the house, and don't let poultry roam the kitchen.

Biosecurity and HPAI

Biosecurity is simply the set of habits that keep disease out of your flock. Here's why it matters now. **HPAI (highly pathogenic avian influenza, or bird flu)** is a fast-moving virus carried by wild waterfowl and other wild birds. It can kill a whole flock within days. Even a tiny backyard flock can be affected. Here are the practical rules:

- **Limit contact with wild birds and their droppings.** Keep your flock away from ponds and wild waterfowl; fence and roof your run; clean up spilled feed.
- **Keep feed and water covered.** Open feed attracts wild birds and rodents.
- **Change shoes and clothes.** Wear dedicated boots in the coop and don't wear them to other farms or feed stores.
- **Wash your hands** before and after caring for the flock.
- **Quarantine new birds for 30 days.** Keep them completely separate and watch them for signs of sickness before adding them to the flock.
- **Report sudden deaths or multiple sick birds.** If several birds die suddenly or you see multiple sick birds, **call your state veterinarian or the USDA at 1-866-536-7593 right away.** Do not move birds, eggs, or equipment off your property until you've talked to them. Reporting quickly protects your flock and your neighbors'.

SECTION 10

Routine Care Calendar

How often	What to do
Daily	Let the flock out at dawn and count them; check each bird for alertness, posture, and eyes
Daily	Refill feed and refresh water; check waterers for ice in winter
Daily	Collect eggs and discard any cracked ones
Daily	Close and lock the coop at dusk and count heads
Daily	Scoop droppings from the droppings board; check the brooder temperature for chicks
Weekly	Wash waterers and feeders; top up oyster shell and grit
Weekly	Refresh wet bedding in the coop and nest boxes
Weekly	Inspect the fencing and latches for gaps or damage
Weekly	Check birds for mites, lice, and weight loss
Monthly	Deep clean the coop; replace bedding and scrub roosts
Monthly	Check the feed for mold and rotate stock
Monthly	Review the predator-proofing, including the buried skirt
Seasonal	Add shade and cool water in summer; dry the coop and prepare heated waterers in winter
Annually	Replace worn latches and hardware cloth; give the coop a full disinfecting; review your flock plan and replace older layers if needed
Annually	Confirm local rules and update your vet contact; check the first-aid kit
After new birds arrive	Quarantine 30 days

SECTION 11

When to Call a Vet or Report

Chickens hide illness by instinct, since a sick bird is a target. By the time a hen looks sick, she has often been struggling for days. When you're unsure, call. Ask your vet whether they treat poultry before you need them; many general vets do not, so ask your county extension office for a referral.

Act today:

- **Several birds sick or dead suddenly. Treat this as possible HPAI.** Keep everyone and everything on your property, then call your state veterinarian or the USDA at **1-866-536-7593** immediately.
- Open-mouth breathing, gasping, wheezing, or a swollen head with blue-tinged comb or wattles
- Bloody droppings in chicks
- A hen straining without producing an egg (egg binding), or any red tissue at the vent
- Paralysis, tremors, or sudden loss of balance
- A crop that is still hard or full after 24 hours
- A serious wound or bleeding from a predator attack
- A limp, collapsed bird in hot weather
- Any bird that cannot stand or has stopped eating and drinking

Book within a few days:

- A limp or swollen foot
- Persistent weight loss, thin shells for several weeks, or egg production dropping sharply outside of molt and winter
- Feather loss or pale combs that don't resolve
- Ongoing mild respiratory signs in one bird
- A lump or growth anywhere on the body

SECTION 12

FAQ

How many chickens should I start with?

Start with **four to six hens**. Chickens are social and should never be kept alone, and a small flock gives you a steady supply of eggs (about two to three dozen a week in good laying season) without overwhelming a first-time keeper. Order one or two extra if your hatchery has a minimum, and plan for the coop and run for your final number. Check your local rules on flock size first, and remember that a few birds may not survive the chick stage.

How much space do chickens need?

Plan on roughly **4 square feet per bird inside the coop** and **10 square feet per bird in the run**. Roosts need **8 to 12 inches per bird**, and you need **one nest box for every 3 to 4 hens**. Large breeds like Brahmas need more room, and bantams need less. More space always helps: crowded flocks are more prone to bullying, feather picking, wet litter, ammonia, and disease.

What do chickens eat?

The foundation is a complete feed that matches the bird's age: **starter at about 18 to 20% protein for chicks**, grower for young pullets, and **layer feed at about 16% protein** with calcium from about 18 to 20 weeks. Offer **free-choice oyster shell** for layers and **grit** if birds eat anything besides complete feed. Treats and scratch should stay under about **10% of the diet**. Avoid avocado, chocolate, raw dry beans, green potato skins, moldy food, and pesticide-treated plants, and always keep clean water available.

How long do chickens live?

A laying hen is most productive for about **2 to 3 years** but commonly lives **5 to 8 years or more** with good care and protection from predators. Cornish Cross broilers are a different story: they are processed at **6 to 10 weeks** and have fragile health if kept longer. For comparison, ducks usually live 8 to 12 years and quail 2 to 3. Plan from the start for what you'll do with older, less productive hens, because they can be companions for years.

How many eggs do chickens lay?

A good laying hen produces roughly **250 to 300 eggs in her first year**, then fewer each year afterward, often by 10 to 20% annually. Breed matters a great deal: production breeds like Leghorns and hybrids lead, while heavy dual-purpose and heritage breeds lay fewer. Eggs slow in winter as daylight drops below about 12 hours, and stop during the fall molt. Most hens begin laying around 18 to 24 weeks of age.

How warm should a brooder be?

Chicks need **95°F in week one**, measured at chick height under the heat source, then a drop of about **5°F each week** until you reach about **70°F or until the chicks are fully feathered**. Always include a cooler area so chicks can move away from the heat. Watch their behavior: huddled and loud means cold, spread out and panting means hot, and evenly scattered and napping means just right. Avoid heat lamps where possible, as they are a fire risk.

Do chickens need a rooster?

No. Hens lay eggs whether or not a rooster is present; a rooster only makes the eggs fertile. A rooster can protect the flock, but he crows, may be restricted by local noise ordinances, and can become aggressive, so many backyard keepers skip him. If you do keep one, plan on about one rooster for every 8 to 10 hens, handle him calmly and consistently from youth, and never turn your back on him.

How do I keep predators out of my coop?

Use **1/2-inch hardware cloth, not chicken wire**, on every opening, and secure it with screws and washers. Add locking latches that a raccoon can't open, bury the fence about 12 inches or lay a 24-inch apron outward to stop diggers, and roof the run against hawks and owls. Most importantly, **close the coop every night** once all the birds are inside. Keep feed in sealed metal bins and pick up eggs daily, since both draw rats and raccoons.

What is the difference between broilers and laying hens?

Broilers are bred to grow very fast for meat, while laying hens are bred to produce eggs over years. Cornish Cross broilers are typically processed at **6 to 10 weeks**, eat a higher-protein ration, and have fragile health if kept longer. Laying hens grow slowly, begin laying at around 18 to 24 weeks, switch to layer feed with calcium, and need roosts and nest boxes. They have different feed, housing, and timelines, so don't mix the two groups.

What should I do if my chickens get sick?

First, separate the sick bird in a quiet, warm, clean space with water and feed, and wash your hands and change shoes after handling her. Look for clear signs such as labored breathing, bloody droppings, a swollen face, or a straining hen, and call a vet who treats poultry. If **several birds are sick or die suddenly, treat it as possible avian influenza**: do not move birds or equipment off the property, and call your state veterinarian or the USDA at **1-866-536-7593** right away.

***Ready to shop?** Start with Poultry Birds. 10% of every purchase supports no-kill animal shelters.*

SECTION 13

Every Purchase Gives Back

Before we earn a dime, **10% of every purchase at Walnut Creek Supply goes to no-kill animal shelters across the country.** Not at checkout. Not an option. Off the top of every order, every day, because we believe responsible animal keeping and community care are the same commitment made in two directions.

If you've read this guide, you're already ahead: you know the coop size, the brooder numbers, and the call to make if something looks wrong. If you're in a position to open your home to a rescued animal as well, your local no-kill shelter will be glad to hear from you.

We're a family business in Christiana, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. We grow our own food, keep our own animals, and stock the goods we'd put in front of our own flock: **no mystery ingredients, Clean Fuel, No Junk.** If you have a question about your brooder setup, your feed, or your first coop, call us at **(717) 983-8069**. We'd rather talk it through with you.

Welcome to the flock. Here's to full egg baskets and happy hens.

*From our family to yours, **Walnut Creek Supply** — Christiana, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania walnutcreeksupply.com*