

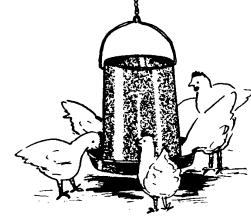


The University of Georgia

Cooperative Extension Service

College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences / Athens, Georgia 30602-4356

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BACKYARD FLOCK TIP . . .

LINKS FOR SUCCESSFUL BACKYARD CHICKEN FLOCKS

Raising backyard flocks has long been a favorite hobby of people living in rural areas. Currently, there has been an expanding interest in this hobby to include chicken raising in urban environments as well. This Backyard Poultry Tip will provide information and links for successful flock management, equipment construction or purchasing, nutrition, egg management, and disease prevention and care.

First have pens and equipment ready

Before chickens arrive, you need to have a good environment ready for them. A pen or coop is needed so that the chickens are protected from the weather and predators. Also, feeding and watering equipment will be needed. Below are listed some internet sources for the construction or purchasing of needed equipment.

www.backyardchickens.com

www.cyndilou6.com

www.omlet.us

madcitychickens.com/coops.html

www.henspa.com

www.gatewaytovermont.com/thefarm/chickens.htm

www.backyardchickenbarn.com

www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/poultry/factsheets/10.html

Getting chickens

There are two good ways to get chickens. First, either adult chickens or fertile eggs can be obtained from other chicken fanciers. It is possible that there are hobbyists in your area where eggs or chickens can be purchased. Make sure that you get chickens from only healthy flock sources. Question the supplier about the disease and vaccination history of the flock. A second possibility is to order day old chicks from a hatchery supplier. Yes, healthy chicks can come in the mail. McMurray hatchery (800-456-3280) and other hatcheries provide mail service for sending chicks in the mail. Most of these suppliers are part of the National Poultry Improvement Plan that insures that the purchased chicks are disease-free and from healthy flocks. Additionally, local newspaper classified ads frequently list local suppliers. The *Farmers Market Bulletin* is an excellent resource for finding chickens to raise.

www.mcmurrayhatchery.com/category/books_and_more.html

PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

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The Cooperative Extension service officers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability
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Nutrition

Use only quality feed obtained from a feed and seed store or certain hardware stores to insure proper nutrition. Chickens love to eat scratch feed such as corn. However, using too much scratch feed will dilute the nutrition and slow the development of the chickens. For example, chickens need a good source of protein (around 12 to 16 % of their total diet). Formulated feed from a feed supplier provides the proper nutrients while scratch feed such as corn will have only 8 to 9 % protein. Tailor the feed ingredients to the age of the birds you are raising and to the type of birds. Categories of feed include starter feed for very young chicks, grower feed for developing chicks, laying mash for adult laying chickens. Adult broiler type chickens would need finishing feed.

Egg Management

The proper egg management depends on the purpose of your flock. Are the birds being raised to provide eating eggs or are they being raised to provide hatching eggs for incubating? For either purpose the eggs must be gathered daily. Eggs for eating can be wiped clean and stored in the refrigerator. Hatching eggs can be wiped clean using a disinfectant such as Lysol™ to prevent contamination during incubation. Hatching eggs should not be stored in a refrigerator. They should be kept in a cool, clean environment until time for setting. Ideally, hatching eggs should be stored at 60⁰ to 70⁰ F and 75 to 80 % relative humidity. The exact temperature and humidity are difficult to maintain for backyard flock egg storage, but success may be achieved by storing the in a cool environment such as a basement. Storing hatching eggs for longer than a week will result in a loss in the percentage of the eggs that will hatch.

Disease Prevention

There are a number of web sites that will help to prevent poultry diseases and offer suggestions to treat diseases and parasites if the flock becomes infected. Some of these are listed below. Expand these by doing in internet search on poultry diseases and prevention.

edis.ifas.ufl.edu/VM015

www.antwifarms.com/chickendiseases.shtml

www.birdhealth.com.au/bird/chick-fowl

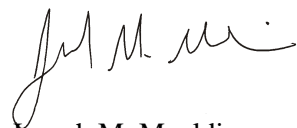
p072.ezboard.com/bbackyardchickens

www.ansci.umn.edu/poultry/resources/diseases.htm

Summary

Raising backyard chickens can be a fun and rewarding hobby. The University of Georgia has provided tips for raising backyard flocks for over 30 years. These backyard

Poultry Tips can be found on the UGA website (www.uga.edu/poultryscience). Information can be found on almost any topic related to flock management.



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