Production Basics
How Do I Raise Poultry for Eggs and Meats?

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Getting Started

- Check the laws and zoning regulations where you live.
- Not all incorporated towns will allow poultry production.
- Make friends with your neighbors, let them know your plans before you start.
Why Raise Chickens?

- Eggs
- Meat Production
- To have some chickens...lifestyle.
Selecting the Right Variety

- A hen will produce eggs with or without a rooster.

- Eggs can either be eaten or if fertile, incubated to produce a bird to be raised for meat production or replacement layers.
Selecting the Right Variety

- Not all breeds are the same. The best layers do not make the best meat birds.
- Other speakers today will discuss the breed characteristics.
• **Egg Production?**
  
  • These are generally lighter breeds selectively bred for their ability to produce a high numbers of eggs over their lifetime.
  
  • Remember that laying hens rarely start laying until they are around 6 months old.
  
  • Plan your production cycle around this point.
Meat Birds?

Do you plan on raising chickens just long enough to get them to butchering size and then not have to worry about feed and housing for the rest of the year?
Meat Birds?

- Meat breeds tend to be heavier than egg producing breeds. They generally grow bigger and faster, and tend to convert feed into muscle (meat) more efficiently.
- Some meat varieties can reach slaughter size in as little as 8 weeks.
A Combination of Both?

- Are you looking to have a flock of all purpose egg and meat producers?
- There are many varieties of chickens that have been bred to do both.
- Dual purpose breeds produce a reasonable amount of eggs, while utilizing feed to produce meat well enough to produce a good meat bird.
• A Combination of Both?
  – Dual purpose breeds may require a little more time to get to reach butchering size (12-16 weeks), but for individuals who wants to raise birds for their own use - these breeds are make a good choice.
A Lifestyle Flock?

- Are you looking for just a few nice looking birds so you can say you have chickens that are really just pets? (eat Stink Bugs) (there's nothing wrong with that...).
- There are many breeds of chickens that have been developed simply because of their appearance, size, (bantams) and personality.
- There are many beautiful varieties.
Production Basics

- Will you let your chickens roam your fields, or will you keep them confined in a coop and/or run?
- A combination of both is often used in small flocks.
• Your space limitations may determine the answer to this question.
• If you live in an urban or suburban setting, you probably want to keep the birds confined - with a fenced run outside their coop for fresh air and sunshine.
Housing

- Housing for chickens can be extremely simple.
- The fundamental requirements are that the birds be protected from the wind or heavy drafts; and that they be completely dry.
- Chickens have a strong instinct to roost; so will be more content if furnished with some structure on which to roost.
Free Range, Confined or a Combination?

- Many home flocks are designed to allow the chickens to be on the ground.
- This can fit in with vegetable production to help control grubs and small insects in the soil.
- To eat weeds and weed seed.
Roost
Different Housing Styles
Purpose

- The intended purpose of your flock helps determine many aspects of your production basics.
- Poultry housing protects the birds from the elements (weather), predators, injury and theft.
- Layers would require year round enclosures.
- Broilers may not require year round enclosures-dependent on the time of year you wish to be raising the birds.
Chickens Need Space

- Space requirements vary according to the type and age of the birds.
- Small breed varieties (Bantams) will need 2-3 square feet of space
- Layers and larger breeds may require from 3 to 5 square feet per bird.
- Overcrowding leads to many problems.
Chickens Need Space

- Space for resting, feeding, watering and movement.
- Protection and escape from the weather and from predators.
- Adequate ventilation to avoid moisture buildup and stale air.
If the flock has constant access to the outside, they will do fine with less space in their "sleeping quarters" inside.
If the chicken shelter is tight and dry, it is not necessary to provide artificial heat; and it could be detrimental to do so.

Chickens are very cold tolerant.
- Design your housing with predator protection (especially at night) in mind. But don't anticipate threats like dogs, raccoons, and foxes only - at least weasel can get through any opening large enough for a rat!
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) inch hardware cloth works very well.
- Plan ahead, it is easier than having to purchase replacements.
- Be sure to provide sufficient nest boxes (one for each seven to nine hens) positioned above floor level; keep them lined with plenty of clean straw; and collect eggs frequently.

- These measures help keep the eggs clean and unbroken, and reduce the likelihood of egg eating, a bad habit which - once established - is difficult to break.
Many health problems can be avoided by following the following five steps

- Purchase healthy birds from healthy flocks.
- Keep coops clean.
- Provide clean food and water. Clean equipment that holds food and water regularly.
- Remove wet or damp bedding.
- Keep vaccinations up to date.
• Start with a clean and disinfected brooding house or coop, and all equipment.
Getting Started

• When you first get your chicks, be sure to offer them five things right away:
  ○ warmth of about 100 degrees
  ○ suitable floor covering
  ○ cool, fresh water
  ○ food
  ○ protection from predators

○ More is discussed on this topic later today.
Getting Started

• Measure the temperature inside their enclosure at their shoulder level.
• If they regularly huddle together, they are not warm enough.
Lighting

- Layers produce more eggs as the day length increases.
- Electric lighting can be used to provide additional light to keep layer production up.
- Hens prefer 15 hours of light per day.
- One 40 watt bulb can supply enough light to keep up to 100 birds
• Remember- Pullets will not start to produce eggs until about 22 weeks old.
• A hen will produce about 260 eggs in a year, that works out to one egg every 34 hours.
• Have enough hens to provide for your needs in eggs, either for your consumption or for anticipated sales.
• If you start with day-old stock, you must be prepared for your baby chicks.

• Set up an enclosed brooder which is free from drafts and protected from rodents, cats, etc.; and which contains an absorbent litter such as wood shavings and a source of heat such as a 250-watt lamp or two.
• The waterer should be designed so that the chicks cannot wade into it and get wet.
• Temperature should be maintained so that the chicks are neither huddling under the heat source, nor huddling in a corner as far as possible from the heat.
• If they are moving around the brooder, all is well.
• Frequent monitoring of the brooder is the key to success.
Of course, if you have a mother hen who is raising your new chicks, you don't have to worry about any of this. When it comes to raising baby chickens, a mother hen is a lot smarter than you.
Figure A – Brooder set-up recommendation
Figure C - Too hot

- Brooder Guard
- Chicks
- Brooder
- Heat Source
Figure D – Just right
• As the chicks grow, they will develop a greater ability to deal with the temperature.
• The brooder guard may be moved to provide additional room, and eventually removed altogether.
• Providing a draft free initially is extremely important in the beginning.
As the chicks grow, air flow to prevent moisture buildup is equally as important.

- Damp bedding will lead to air quality problems.