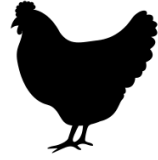


CHICKS



General Info:

You can expect hens to begin laying in October or November if purchased in April and May.

Roosters are not necessary for egg production.

Standard breed layers will lay 140-280 eggs per year, depending on breed. They don't lay much in December-February because of decreased day length. It takes 14-18 hours of daylight per egg.

The folks at Renfrow's will gladly help you get started off right with your new chicks. We have all the supplies and advice that you will need. Please feel free to ask questions. We will do all we can to make sure you will find pleasure in your new project.

Renfrow's Chick Calendar

Chicks arrive bi-weekly during March and April; we publish the tentative delivery schedule on our website by February each year. The day-old chicks usually arrive before we open on Thursday mornings and we often have a line at the door when we open at 8am. All chicks are first-come, first-served.

We order all females, unless otherwise noted on our calendar. Female day-old chicks are called "pullets." If the breed has the words "straight run" beside them, this means there is no reliable way for the hatchery to distinguish the two sexes and you have a 50/50 shot at getting a hen. We receive 5 to 10 breeds per week and receive most breeds multiple times during our chick season. The hatching business is not an exact science but the hatchery is usually very accurate on ship dates and sex of the pullets.

Housing for Chicks:

Chicks can be raised safely in various housing environments. The primary requirements are that they stay warm, dry and out of drafts. They do best in a heatable (*and cleanable...chicks create dust*) space when they are very young. A recycling bin works well for the first week or two. Once they start jumping and flying, they do well in a container the size of a dog crate.

Chicks over six weeks of age can use outdoor runs or pens *in mild weather*, but still need shelter from the weather and predators such as rats, cats, and hawks.

Initial Space Requirements:

Chicks need approximately 0.8 sq. ft. of floor space per bird until six weeks of age. Increase this to 1.0-2.0 sq. ft. from 6-20 weeks, as they grow depending on size of breed, outdoor run availability, temperature, etc.

Their home must be clean and dry. Place 1" of litter on the floor. Common beddings are pine shavings, straw or even mulched leaves. Since these very young chicks do not have a mother to show them what to eat, avoid wood shavings during their first week as that can plug up the chicks. Instead, use a towel or crumpled newspaper until they learn to distinguish food from non- food in their space.

Flock size:

Three to four hens will provide the average family with plenty of eggs February through November. They cut back on laying in the winter. Expect approximately 250 eggs per year from each hen during the first several years of life. As they age, their egg quantities will decrease and eventually older hens will hit "henopause" and quit laying altogether.

Brooding Equipment:

A reflector light may be suspended about 15-20" above the floor or better, two in case one burns out. Heat is important for the well being of the chicks. They will regulate their own temperature. We suggest using a 75 to 100 watt bulb as a heat source. Heat lamps and bulbs are stock items at Renfrow's.

Preheat the house and adjust the temperature to 90°F. at the floor level. The temperature is comfortable for chicks if they are evenly distributed around the space not huddling under the heat source or at the outside edges trying to escape the heat. Temperature is gradually reduced by 5°F each week to a minimum of 55°F. The floor space needs to be big enough they can get away from the heat source to cool off. Think of the warm spot under the light as the warm spot under a mother hen's wings.

Other Equipment:

Feeders and waterers will be needed immediately. Get equipment that can be easily sanitized. Renfrow's suggests the small jar type feeder and waterer at first. It creates less waste of food and water. Larger feeders may be purchased later. We have many sizes and types in stock.

Feed:

Start & Grow is the best food for chicks. This will be used until they are about 20 weeks of age. Then you will transition to "laying feed", "scratch grain" or a combination of the two for the remainder of the chickens' lives. Food for your chicks is always available at Renfrow's. Our feed is antibiotic free. Once chicks are at least 4 weeks old, feel free to supplement their diet with kitchen vegetable or bread scraps.

Housing for grown hens:

There are numerous ways to raise and house chickens. We suggest you look at the demonstration coop in the back yard of Renfrow's. It is plenty of space for 6-10 chickens. It has a perch and is covered for rain and hawks. Having one side closed-in is usually enough. Chickens, after all, wear down jackets and in our

part of the country the cold is not usually a problem. The heat can be much more problematic – providing shade and good air circulation and fresh water in the summer is extremely important.

We have many of the supplies for building the right size pen. Pens can be permanent structures or rolling "chicken tractor" pens that move weekly to new grass.

During the winter, full-grown chickens do not need to be provided any heat, but need shelter from wind and rain. They prefer to roost on a perch about 1" square instead of sleeping on the ground or floor.

Let your flock run in the yard each afternoon for 1-2 hours before sunset. They will put themselves back to bed on their roost in their house.

Sanitation/Chicken Health/People Health:

Keeping confined poultry requires the keepers to maintain clean litter, clean water and fresh food. The pen behind Renfrow's never has a smell or any flies, but the chickens are not crowded and scratch and compost all their droppings in place. Wet bedding and droppings that linger can lead to sick chickens and sick humans. Use of hand sanitizer is encouraged especially for children. Of course, if you let them range some during the day they will fertilize your yard and eat a more varied diet.

Regulations:

Chickens are legal in Matthews and Charlotte. Both municipalities require a permit much like your dog and cat. The regulations for both municipalities read almost identically. For Matthews, go to the Town of Matthews, home page → government → ordinances → general regulations → animals → section 91A-42 (farm animals). For Charlotte, go to animal control and search "fowl".

Internet Resources:

There are hundreds of YouTube videos on every imaginable subject related to chickens. There are also numerous websites and blogs related to chickens. Most of the information is pretty accurate. The internet has proven to be a great resource especially for children learning about chickens.

We do see folks that spend way too much time studying odd breeds and rare diseases that get them too worked up. Use the Internet as a supplement for good common sense and advice from Renfrow's. After all, folks have been keeping chickens without the Internet for quite a few centuries.

Misc. Comments:

- Chickens are social creatures. We recommend purchasing no fewer than three chicks to create a family unit. This makes for happy and healthy chicks.
- Chickens are farm animals and some will die. Children should be prepared for that possibility. A word to the wise: hold off on naming the chicks right away.
- We receive all chicks certified disease-free. Chicks must be treated gently for several weeks. They are all vaccinated for Marek's Disease.