



## Benefits of Keeping a Rooster

Roosters are noisy, and some can be aggressive. They don't lay eggs, and they cost just as much to care for as a hen. So why would you want to keep one in your flock? Although roosters have their drawbacks, the pros of having one with your hens far outweigh the cons. Here are some good reasons to keep a rooster:

**1. Happy hens.** Harmony among hens is more likely when a rooster is part of the flock. Roosters keep the peace by breaking up fights between hens, and keeping weaker hens from getting picked on. Without a rooster in the group, hens may start jockeying for the position of leader, which can result in fights.

**2. Protection.** If your hens are free-ranging, a rooster will safeguard them from predators. Roosters are always on the lookout for danger, and will sound a warning for the hens if a hawk is flying overhead, or a cat comes into the yard. Some roosters will even take on a predator, risking their lives to save the flock.

**3. Better food.** Free-ranging hens that live with a rooster have a more well-rounded diet. That's because the rooster is always on the lookout for bugs, and other delicacies that he can show to his hens. A rooster will



search for morsels in the dirt, and then call his hens over when he finds something good. If the hen doesn't eat it right away, the rooster will pick it up and drop it in front of her, encouraging her to dine.

**4. Vocal alerts.** Roosters are famous for crowing, but they don't do it only at dawn. They also use crowing as an alarm. A vigilant rooster will sound off when a stranger comes on the property, letting everyone know within earshot that something isn't right.

**5. Aesthetics.** While hens can be beautiful birds, nothing can compete with a good-looking rooster. Depending on the breed, roosters usually come with a large comb, draping waddles, and long tail feathers. Some of the larger breeds, such as the Rhode Island Red and Cubalaya, produce stunning roosters.

**6. Enjoyment.** When a rooster is part of the flock, chickens are more fun to watch. Roosters perform something called "the shuffle dance" for their hens, which involves dropping one wing while taking short little steps to get the hen's attention. Plus, just seeing a rooster doting over his hens, offering them treats, and keeping them from wandering too far from the coop makes keeping chickens all the more enjoyable.

Adding a rooster to your flock will make your hens safer and your time watching them more enjoyable. Your hens will thank you for it.

Audrey Pavia is an award-winning freelance writer specializing in animal subjects. She's authored hundreds of articles for pet, trade and farm publications, including Veterinary Practice News, Western Horseman, Hobby Farms, Chickens, Urban Farm, and Dogster magazines.