



How to Get Started with Backyard Poultry

Starting Your Birds: Be Ready

Have brooder, heat lamps, waterers and all facilities set up, warmed up and ready before birds arrive.

- Clean and disinfect all facilities and equipment
- Remember, CLEAN AND DRY is a must for chicks
- Ensure good ventilation, but prevent drafts
- Allow chicks to drink before they eat
- Always keep fresh water available
- Use a water-soluble medication as an aid for stressed birds
- Keep feeders clean and dry
- Provide feed free-choice at all times
- If chicks “pile up,” check the floor temperature
- Check chicks often; remove sick or dying chicks
- Eliminate all possible access by rodents
- Consider de-beaking chicks at 7–10 days of age

BIOSECURITY

As a bird owner, keeping your birds healthy is a top priority. Biosecurity means doing everything you can to protect your birds from disease. Your birds can become sick or die from exposure to just a few bacteria, viruses or parasites. In a single day, these pathogens can multiply and infect all your birds. However, by practicing backyard biosecurity you can keep your birds safe from infection by creating and using a biosecurity plan.

Illness and Health

Owning chickens can be a lot of fun and a very rewarding experience, but it is important to always remember to protect yourself and your chicks against common diseases. Prevention of many diseases can be strengthened by always ensuring your chickens are housed in a dry, clean coop. Ideally, the chicken's coop

See next page for space and temperature requirements.

should be rodent free as they can transmit many diseases to chickens. Fresh bedding will help ensure a dry environment. Below are some common chicken related diseases.

Salmonella

Salmonella is a bacteria that can be shed from chicks, ducklings and other poultry. People can contract *Salmonella* by eating contaminated food or from touching contaminated birds or their environment. People typically get sick from hand-to-mouth contact with the bird or environment. Washing hands extensively after being around poultry or their coop will drastically reduce the opportunity to contract *Salmonella*.

Coccidiosis

Coccidia are protozoan parasites. Nearly every chicken yard has coccidia which can lay dormant until chickens are present. Severe coccidia in chickens may cause death. Chickens 4 to 16 weeks old are most commonly affected. Wet litter, poor nutrition and a stressed immune system are common triggers for coccidiosis. If birds are not vaccinated for coccidiosis, feeding them a medicated feed labeled for coccidiosis prevention will help deter the disease.

Marek's Disease

Lesions attacking the nervous system, organs and other tissues are characteristic of Marek's disease. Chickens 16 weeks of age or younger are most susceptible. Vaccinations for the prevention of the Marek's Disease are offered by most hatcheries at the time of order.

USDA bird biosecurity site:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian-influenza-disease/birdbiosecurity>

Floor Space Requirements	
Age	Square Feet Per Bird
1 – 8 weeks	1.0
8 – 18 weeks	2.0 – 2.5
18+ weeks	3.0 – 3.5

Litter
2 to 3 inches of shavings, sawdust, etc.

Temperature
Layers and Broilers 90°–95°F for the first week
Game Birds 95°–98°F for the first week
Measure the temperature at 2 inches above the floor
Place the heat lamp 18 to 20 inches above the floor level
Reduce temperature 5°F per week until you reach 70°F
One 250-watt heat lamp per 50 to 75 chicks

Feeder Space Requirements
2 to 3 inches per bird (linear) or 20 to 25 birds per feeder pan

Waterer Space	
Age	Waterer Space Required
1 – 8 weeks	1 inch per bird (linear) or 75–100 birds per round metal drinker
8 – 18 weeks	2 inches per bird (linear) or 50–100 birds per round metal drinker
18+ weeks	2 inches per bird (linear) or 50–100 birds per round metal drinker

Pen Pals® Backyard Poultry Products

