



Backyard Chickens 101

Free State Master Gardeners
Van Zandt County Library Series

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Preparing for Raising Chickens

- First, You'll need a chicken coop
- Chickens need food (and water) daily
- Hens will lay through the spring into fall, as long as they have 12-14 hours of daylight
- You need to tend to their needs all year



Before Chickens: What To Do

- Do you live in a City or County?

- Who to Ask?

- What to Ask?



Questions to Ask Your City Officials Before Buying Chickens

- ✓ How Many Birds Are Allowed?
- ✓ Are Both Hens and Roosters Acceptable?
- ✓ Are There Rules On Where The Coop can Be Built?
- ✓ Do I need a Permit to Raise Chickens and/or Build a Coop?
- ✓ What Do I Need From My Neighbors Before Starting?
- ✓ Canton

Before Chickens: What You'll Need

- ✓ Coop
 - ✓ Design Options
 - ✓ Coop Considerations
- ✓ Fencing?
- ✓ Starter Feed – Crumbles or Pellets
- ✓ Fishing Net?
- ✓ Waterer

Coop Designs and Considerations

- Design Options
 - Tractors
 - Wagons
 - Coops
- Each Bird needs 4 sq ft of Indoor Space if no outside run is included, 2 sq ft if they have outside area.
- Outside Area Should provide 5-10 sq ft per bird

Tractors



My Tractor





Just Coops



Feeders & Waterers



Other Coop Considerations

- Include Door and Floor
- Roost Bars
- Ventilation
- Light ?
- Manure
- Bedding material
- Egg Boxes
- Fencing



Breed Selection Considerations

- ✓ Dozens of Varieties
- ✓ Color of Eggs
- ✓ Temperment
- ✓ Meat or Eggs or Both
- ✓ Noise Level
- ✓ Rooster or No?

What Purpose Would They Serve?

Cornish -

- Raised for meat
- Lays brown eggs (med – large)
- Weight:
Rooster(10.5 lbs.),
Hen(8 lbs.)
- Calm disposition



Common Breeds

Orpington –

- lay brown eggs(large)
- weight: Rooster (10 lbs.), Hen(8 lbs.)
- docile, friendly, quiet



Primarily Eggs

Ancona -

- lays white eggs(large)
- weight: Rooster(6 lbs.), Hen(4.5 lbs.)
- flighty, noisy, shy



Primarily Eggs

Leghorn -

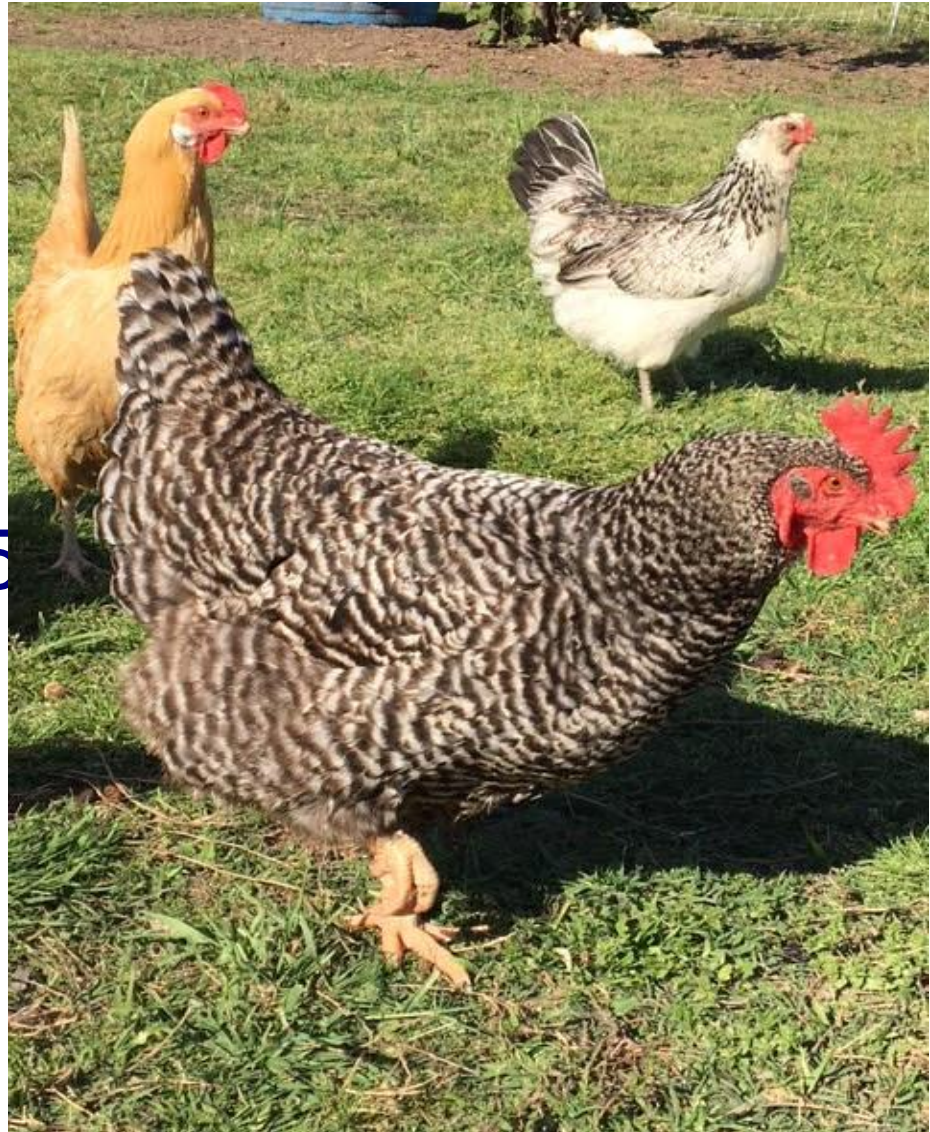
- lays white eggs(large)
- weight: Rooster(6 lbs.), Hen(5 lbs.)
- nervous, flighty



Dual Purpose

Barred Rock -

- lays cream/brown eggs (med-large)
- weight: Rooster (9.5 lbs.), Hen (7.5 lbs.)
- docile, friendly



Dual Purpose

Rhode Island Red -

- lays brown eggs (large/x-large)
- weight: Rooster(8.5 lbs.), Hen(6.5 lbs.)
- docile



Where Do I Buy Chickens? What Should I Consider Before Buying?

Local hatcheries:

- Close enough to visit in person and able to judge the cleanliness of hatchery & the health of chickens
- Several breeds and ages to choose from
- Owner should be willing to answer questions

Where Do I Buy Chickens? What Should I Consider Before Buying?

Feed stores:

- Local, selection may be limited
- You can observe chicks for signs of lethargy/illness
- Should be someone who works there that is knowledgeable about chickens and able to answer any questions you have

Rooster or No?

Pros

- Guard hens and alert them of impending danger
- Fertilize eggs
- Help with pecking order (mediator)
- Aesthetics

Cons

- Too passive to be of any assistance to hens
- Can be overly aggressive
- Crows in middle of night or early morning

Chicks or Pullets?



Chicks require:

- Brooder - different types available
- Heat and light source
- Feeder and waterer
- Food - chick starter/grower; chick grit
- Clean bedding
- Adequate ventilation

Chicks or Pullets?

A Pullet is a 15-22 week old hen

Pullets require:

- Coop - sized appropriately for the number of chickens it will be accommodating; well ventilated
- Feeder and waterer
- Food - starter/grower until they are at an appropriate age for adult feed
- Run area that allows plenty of space for chickens. Do not overcrowd.

Collecting, Cleaning, Storing Eggs

- You'll want to collect every morning and check in afternoon
- Color of Eggs
- Refrigerate or Not?
- The Bloom
- Eggs are permeable



Just A Few More Considerations

- Keep Them Hydrated
- Provide a Dust Bath
 - 1/3 Sand
 - 1/3 wood ash
 - 1/3 nature soil
 - Add a cup of DE
- Shade
- Nesting Box



Caring for Chickens

A healthy chicken:

- Has bright, clear eyes
- No discharge from nasal cavity
- Clean feathers that are not in disarray
- Scales on legs and feet are clean, having no loose or inflamed scales
- Shows an interest in eating and drinking
- Is socializing with the rest of the flock
- Is alert to its surroundings

First Aid Kit



- Old towels
- Saline wound wash
- Styptic powder
- Antibiotic ointment
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Water-based lubricant
- Povidone iodine antiseptic
- Popsicle sticks
- Rolled gauze
- Tweezers
- Disposable gloves
- Paper towels
- First aid tape
- Electrolyte powder
- syringe

Predator Control

If you want a dog for protection of your chickens, research breeds thoroughly. Livestock Guardian Dogs (LGDs) are great at protecting chickens as well as other livestock.



Predator Control

Most common LGDs in Texas:

- Great Pyrenees
- Anatolian Shepherd
- Maremma
- Akbash

Herding dogs can be trained to protect chickens,
but have a high prey-drive

Pedator Control

- If you already own dogs and want to raise chickens as well, it's possible to do so. Make sure the chicken coop and run are completely secure.
- Consider electric fencing
- Free-ranging chickens with your dog will require patience and training. Integrating them does not always work out; be prepared to have a large enough run area if this is the case. A chicken tractor is great as well.