

*Full of advice
on caring for
your pet*

Your guide to **Chickens**



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Are you ready?

Chickens are very fun pets to keep and are increasingly becoming a popular hobby. They are relatively easy pets to keep and look after, and the start up costs for your chickens are relatively low. They do not require a lot of room, however the more room you can provide them the better.



Proper housing is key to happy, healthy birds

There are many benefits to keeping chickens, with the main being a regular supply of fresh eggs on a daily basis. Your chickens will also dispose of weeds and garden pests by eating them although, some plants and weeds are poisonous and slugs and worms carry parasites so, ensure your chickens are wormed regularly. Poultry manure is an effective natural fertiliser due to its high level of nitrogen content.

Chickens really do have fantastic personalities. Every one of your chickens will have their own mesmerizing personality that you will find entertaining. They come in all different shapes, sizes and colours and each will provide you with a great pet.

Your chickens will still require a certain amount of time, money and commitment from you throughout their life so it is important to ensure that you are able to provide them with the life they deserve.

Which Chickens?

How many Chickens? Chickens are very sociable birds so it is not a good idea to keep them on their own. They should be kept in groups of a minimum of two. Introducing new chickens to existing hens must be done with care.



Which Chicken breed? There are over 400 types of chicken to choose from so it is important to do your research. If you want chickens for high quality egg production then you should search specifically for the laying breeds.

Standard or Bantam - Standards are normal size chickens and are also known as 'large fowl'. Bantams are a lot smaller than standards and weigh in at approximately one to two pounds each. Bantams are known to make great pets however they do lay eggs less frequently and are smaller. Your Bantams can also become prey to predators such as crows due to their smaller size. Standards lay large eggs frequently and would be less likely to be attacked by predators.

Mix breeds - You can mix breeds in your flock although, it is advisable to keep breeds similar in size in small areas. Introducing new chickens should be done carefully.

Chicken Coop

It is important to provide high quality housing for your chickens, not only to keep them happy but to also keep them safe from predators. Your chicken coops must provide the following for your new pets:

1. Be secure from predators from the sides and also importantly from above and below. The most common predator for your chickens are foxes. Ensure that the holes in your chicken wire are not too big as this can be another way predators can get in.
2. Secure your coop from rodents coming in from below. Rats can get in this way so it is a good idea to have a secure floor for your coop or bury small mesh fencing deep down into the ground all around the coop to protect them.
3. Your coop will need to supply roosting poles for the hens.
4. To encourage egg laying you will need to provide 1 nest box for every four chickens. The nest boxes will need to be a few inches off the ground but lower than the roosting poles.
5. Your coop should provide enough room for all your chickens. At least 4 square feet per bird is recommended.
6. Clean area daily.
7. The chicken run will also need to be



secure to stop predators from getting in. So ensure that all perimeters are secure and also from underneath to stop rodents getting in.

Your local Jollyes will be more than happy to advise you on appropriate housing and runs for your chickens.

Feeder & waterer - Your chickens will need feeders and waterers that are suspended or hang off the ground.

Food - Your chickens will require complete feeds that have the correct amount of vitamins, minerals, proteins, carbohydrates and fat in them. Your local Jollyes can advise you on appropriate chicken feeds. Young chicks will require a special food.

Poultry Grit - This is essential to your chicken's digestive as it grinds down their food in the gizzard. Your chicken will need poultry grit in a separate dish.

Bedding - There are many types of bedding you can use for your chicken coop. Hay is a good choice as it provides warmth to your chickens and it is relatively inexpensive to buy.

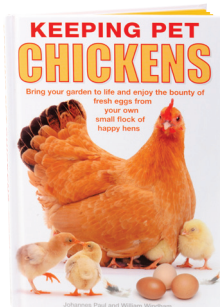
Dust baths - All chickens love dust baths. It is a necessary process for them as it prevents infestations of mites and lice.

Ensure that your chicken run provides a dry area where they can dig a dust bath. If you do not provide this facility you will need to place a box outside the coop and fill it with dust powder.

Daily checks

Chickens are quite easy pets to look after but they do require certain daily Care.

1. Ensure that the feeders and waterers are full.
2. Make sure that the water is clean and fresh.



You should always buy two or more



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3. Always check that your chickens are active and looking healthy. If they do not then seek advice from your local vet as soon as possible.
4. Check and collect the eggs on a daily basis.
5. Take food out of runs at night.
6. Chickens need regular worming.
7. Always check that your chicken coop and run is secure in the morning and at night.

They all have their own distinct personality

Bedding - You will need to change the bedding in the coop and the nest at least on a monthly basis. Ensure to move all waste and droppings on a daily basis.

Other Considerations

Handling - Chickens can be quite frustrating at the start. They will wriggle and try to break free so you must try to create a good balance with being gentle but also holding them firmly. Place one hand on their back and your other hand to secure their legs. Secure one leg between your thumb and forefinger and the other between the forefinger and the middle finger. Once you have them up you should hold them close to your body to prevent them from getting free. The more your chickens get used to being handled the tamer they will become.

Winter - Your chickens will adapt to the weather changes along with the seasons. Chickens lay according to hours of daylight and may stop or lay less frequently in the winter months.

Adding additional straw to the coop in winter months is normally sufficient or you can heat your coop. You must ensure that the heater is always on over the winter as a sudden drop in temperature can be fatal for chickens that are used to heated coops. In the winter always ensure that the water supply is fresh and not frozen over, chickens cannot live very long without fresh water.

Summer - Excessive heat can be a threat to your chickens. Ensure that they have daily access to fresh water and are able to shade themselves if need be. Hens may produce less eggs in very hot temperatures, which is down to stress. Once the weather has cooled down the rate of their eggs should go back to normal.



Shopping Checklist

We recommend the following items for your chickens.

Chicken Checklist

- Appropriate Chicken coop
- Chicken run
- Roosting poles
- Nest boxes
- Feeder & waterer
- Poultry grit
- Straw or Woodchip for bedding
- Complete Chicken feed
- Container to use as a dust bath
- A book on Chicken care

It is now time to enjoy your chickens and watch them grow into important members of the family.

For further information contact:

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