



Guide to BACKYARD POULTRY

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Inside you'll find...

- Best breeds for beginners
- How to choose healthy birds
- Introducing new birds to your flock
- Tips on maintaining the health of your flock
- Easy boredom busters





Raising Backyard Chickens

Backyard chickens are becoming more popular than ever! And with more and more communities across the nation relaxing their regulations on owning poultry within city limits, the backyard chicken movement is really taking flight!

Whether you choose to raise your birds for eggs, meat or just for their funny personalities as feathered companions, we've compiled some facts and tips on making the most out of your flock. From the day you bring your chicks home to the first egg in the new nesting box, **Little Giant®** is with you every step of the way, with a wide variety of products to support your flock!



Why Raise Chickens?



Nutritious (and delicious) eggs



Great at fertilizing your yard



They make great pets



Natural pest control

Fun Facts About Chickens



Chickens have more than 30 types of vocalizations



Chickens have more bones in their neck than a giraffe!



It takes 25 hours for an egg to be made inside a hen



There are more chickens on Earth than humans



Chickens can recognize up to 100 individual faces



Chickens can run at speeds up to 9 mph



Chickens have full color vision



The average hen lays up to 300 eggs per year





Best Breeds for Beginners

There are hundreds of breeds of chickens to choose from, and it can be intimidating to know which one is best for you. We've selected the top 5 breeds for beginners. These breeds are generally friendly, easy to care for and lay a lot of eggs.

ORPINGTON

- Generally the number one choice of backyard farmers
- Friendly, easy to care for and great for families with children
- Lay at least 180 medium-sized eggs per year
- A hardy breed that tolerates cold well
- Can weigh up to 8 lbs.



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RHODE ISLAND RED

- Excellent layers, producing more than 250 medium-sized eggs per year
- Very friendly and docile
- Easy to care for – can adapt to confinement or free ranging
- Hardy breed

PLYMOUTH ROCK

- Produce up to 200 eggs per year
- Very friendly and easy to handle
- Active and smart
- Do best when they are allowed to free range
- A hardy breed – weighing around 7-8 lbs



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LEGHORN

- Lay 250-300 medium eggs per year
- Not a great choice if you're looking for a pet as they aren't very friendly or tame
- Lightweight, just around 4 lbs.
- Tolerates the heat well

CORNISH

- Great meat bird – fast growing, large bird
- Less active and easily contained
- Should be kept separated from the rest of the flock
- Cold-hardy breed



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How to Choose Healthy Birds

If you're just starting your flock for the very first time, or adding more chicks to your coop, the most important thing you can do is to make sure you're not inviting disease into your backyard.

Signs of a Healthy Chick:

- Alert and active, cheeping softly looking for food, will move away from you when approached – chicks that aren't well will appear lethargic
- Happy, healthy and warm chicks won't huddle together when awake
- Bright-eyed – chicks with a blank stare, crusty eyes or always sleepy may not be healthy
- A beak that is not crossed over or broken – birds with beak issues will have problems eating and drinking
- Healthy feathers – unless you're buying an older chicken during molt, chickens and chicks shouldn't be missing feathers
- Straight legs, feet and toes – an unhealthy chick may have difficulty walking or have poor posture with its neck retracted into its body



If a bird is acting dull, withdrawn or hunched over, it could indicate a serious problem. The key is to purchase birds from a reputable source to ensure healthy chickens and avoid health problems.

Introducing New Birds to Your Flock

The time might come when you want to expand your flock, or maybe a friend or neighbor needs to re-home one of their hens, or you're adopting a stray. Whatever the reason or circumstances around the newcomer, there are a few steps you'll want to take before you introduce the new bird to the rest of your flock.

QUARANTINE You will need to completely quarantine the new bird from the rest of your flock for at least 30 days. Keep the new bird in a completely separate area, away from the rest of the flock. This will ensure that any illness the new bird might have won't spread to the rest of your birds.

SEPARATION After the quarantine period is over, your new feathered friend isn't quite ready to be tossed into the mix. Chickens have a very established pecking order and newcomers are usually seen as a dangerous threat. So it's important to allow the birds to see each other and be near each other, but be separated and not have direct access to each other. This stage lasts for a week or two.

TIME TO MEET! When they're finally ready to meet, some experts recommend placing the new bird in with the other chickens while they're all asleep. Another great way to make introductions easy is to keep the flock distracted (see pg. 9 for fun, boredom-busting treats and activities!) with treats or activities so they don't spend their time chasing and picking on the newcomer.



Maintaining a Healthy Flock

For happy, healthy chickens, keep the following tips in mind:

WATER

Constant access to fresh, clean water is step one in nurturing a healthy flock. And it's critical for egg production! Don't allow waterer troughs to become stagnant or filled with chicken waste or dirt. Our Hen Hydrator is an easy way to offer a full supply of clean water.



SANITIZE

Clean and sanitize – if you visit a neighboring farm with poultry, be sure to wash your hands, any tools, and sanitize your boots to avoid tracking illness back to your flock. Avoid sharing tools if possible.



Treats that are toxic:

- Raw green potato peels
- Avocado skin and pit
- Dried or undercooked beans
- Citrus fruits
- Chocolate

DAMPNESS



Dampness breeds illness – keep the coop clean and dry. Moisture in the coop can cause dangerous bacteria to build up. And in the winter, it can bring on disease and death quickly.

CLEAN



A clean coop is a happy coop – dirty coops are more likely to harbor mites and rodents



FRESH AIR

Allow adequate ventilation in the coop – ventilation is key to allow ammonia gases from chicken waste to escape, and bring in fresh air. Be mindful that this ventilation doesn't cause a draft.

Boredom-busting Activities

Playtime is important for chickens! Here are a few fun ideas to try with your birds!



Water bottle fun: Drill ½" holes into empty plastic bottles and fill with chicken scratch for hours of pecking fun

Take the Tunnel:

Make a tunnel out of an old oatmeal can

Chicken tetherball: Hang a head of cabbage, lettuce or another veggie on a piece of rope (make sure the rope cannot be broken and ingested) for a fun activity.



Pumpkin time!

Give your birds a whole pumpkin – they'll love it!

Mirror, mirror: Attach a mirror that cannot be dislodged or broken for the girls to admire their reflections



Dust bath time: Add a layer of dirt and sand to a deep pan or kiddie pool for a fun dust bath



Up the ladder:

Introduce steps, a ladder or even an old stump for a new perch



For everything you need to care for your flock, Little Giant® is there. From incubation to feeders and waterers, we have you covered. And with many of our products made right here in the USA, you can feel good about your investment.



