



Chicken Diet and Care Recommendations

GENERAL INFORMATION

The chicken (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) is a type of domestic fowl. It is a descendant of the wild Indian and Southeast Asian Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*) and Grey Junglefowl (*Gallus sonneratii*).

Average Life Expectancy, females: 3-5 years

Average Life Expectancy, males: 7-10 years

DIET

Primary diet: Hens that are actively laying eggs need to be fed a layer formula diet. The layer diet for hens is essential as it provides the correct amount of nutrients for egg production. Baby chicks should be fed a starter formula diet, and young chicks should be fed a grower formula diet. Roosters should be fed an adult gamebird maintenance pellet. These diets are commonly sold at feed stores.

Calcium: Laying hens should be provided with oyster shell, an excellent source of calcium, available at all times.

Treats: Occasional corn, fruits and vegetables can be offered but should not make up the majority of the diet.

ENVIORNMENT

Enclosure: Chickens can be housed in an enclosure with indoor/outdoor access, such as a yard with a coop. Each chicken requires at least 100 square feet of personal space. Outdoor areas must be made **PREDATOR SAFE**. Because many predators (raccoons, weasels, dogs, rats) are skilled diggers, the fencing should be buried 12 inches underground, and also covered to protect against arial predators (hawks, falcons, and eagles). Fencing should be “doubled”, and spaced at least 6 inches apart to protect the animals from being grabbed through the fence by a predator.

Bedding: Straw, hay and shavings can be used but need to be changed often to avoid bacterial or fungal growth within the bedding. Paper-based bedding such as Carefresh or Yesterday's News can also be used.

Temperature: Chickens are very adaptable and can handle a wide temperature range. Care should be taken to provide extra shade or bring indoors if the temperature rises above 85F. Provide ceramic heat lamps or bring indoors if the temperature drops below 45F.

Furniture: Hens need to be provided with nest boxes for laying eggs. Nest boxes should always have clean, dry bedding. Most chickens prefer to perch at night, so provide multiple natural wood roosting perches.

MEDICAL CARE

An annual exam performed by a veterinarian is recommended for proper care. Your veterinarian can advise you if any additional testing is required.