



• SINCE 1923 •

# RAISING CHICKENS: HOW TO GET STARTED

Several good things can result from raising chickens in your backyard. Not only are chickens easy to care for and make nice pets, but they deliver fresh eggs that taste better and are more nutritious than store-bought eggs. Chickens also provide fertilizer for gardens and lawn bug control.

What do your chickens need to be happy and healthy? What does a successful backyard chicken coop look like?

Here's the essentials for how to get started with chickens.

## SO, YOU'RE BRINGING HOME BABY CHICKS

First-time chicken owners should consider getting an IFA Chick Starter Kit, which comes with a feeder, waterer, heat lamp, bulb, clamp, thermometer and a bag of Chick Starter

feed. It would also be wise to pick up a bag of chick grit to aid with digestion, along with a brooder to keep the chicks warm and bedding for the bottom.

Arrange the feeder and waterer off the ground when possible to avoid materials being kicked into food and water. It's also a good idea to add vitamins and electrolytes to the chick's water to help with their hydration and digestion after transitioning from the store to your home.

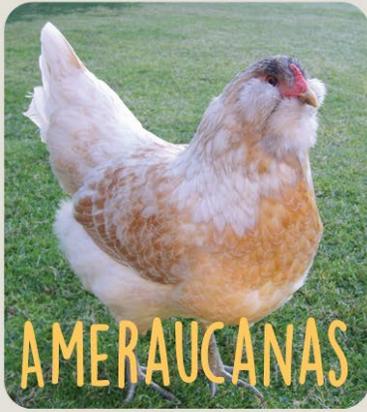
On week one, keep your chicks between 90-95°F. Then reduce the temperature by 5 degrees each week until it matches the coop temperature. If your baby chicks huddle continuously under the lamp, they are too cold. Conversely, if they're pressed against the sides of the brooder trying to get out of the light, they're too hot.

## NEW SUPPLY CHICKLIST

- Brooder . . . . . Box, stock tank, bathtub, etc.
- Bedding . . . . . Paper towels, pine shavings, and chopped straw
- Heat Lamp, Bulb and Clamp\*** . . . . . 125W clear, 250W clear and 250W red are available, 250W red is recommended; it decreases pecking and helps their sleeping patterns
- Feeder\*** . . . . . Several varieties available; plastic and metal, as well as several different fill types
- Waterer\*** . . . . . Several varieties available; choose the best for your flock
- Chick Starter\*** . . . . . IFA Chick Starter crumble is available in 25 lb. and 50 lb. bags
- Chick Grit . . . . . Needs to be "chick" grit; adult grit is too big
- Thermometer\*** . . . . . Read above to see what temperature chicks should be kept at

\*Included in IFA's Chick Starter Kit. Note: Chick Starter feed in 25lb bag.

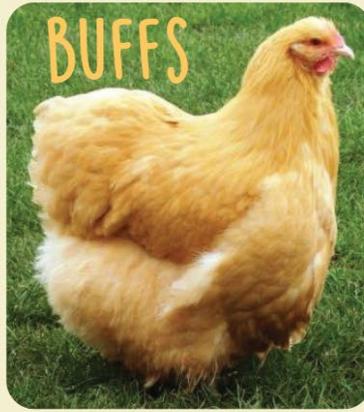




Ameraucanas are good for a back yard flock because they have a sweet temperament, and are tailed, muffed and bearded.

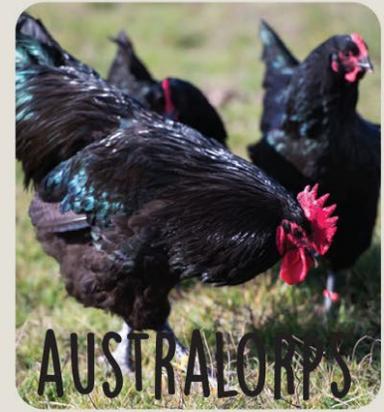
One of the few chicken breeds who lay a medium sized blue or green egg, and each hen can lay a different shade of blue or green shelled eggs.

- FUN PERSONALITY •
- VERY HARDY •



Beautiful, buttery yellow Buff Orpington chickens are referred to as the “golden retrievers” of the chicken world. Buffs are notoriously calm, sweet, friendly chickens. They are fairly large, but not so large as to be intimidating to most little ones.

- LARGE BROWN EGGS •
- COLD HARDY •
- HEAT TOLERANT •



Brilliant black, Australorps are solid black, although their feathers will shine with a purple and green sheen in the sunlight.

The name Australorp comes from blending the words “Australian” and “Orpington,” very similar in size and temperament to Buffs.

- PALE TAN EGGS •
- CALM AND FRIENDLY •

## THE FEED THEY NEED

Chick Starter feed is essential for the first eight weeks of the chick's life. After that point they can be introduced to IFA Pullet Developer, which will help them grow and develop into laying hens. Once they start laying eggs, you should switch them to a layer ration.

IFA Country Stores offer five different layer rations. These layer rations contain the extra calcium a chicken needs when producing eggs. All IFA bags display a percentage referring to the protein content: (1) 18% crumble; (2) 16% mash; (3) 16% pellet; (4) 20% mash; and (5) 20% pellet.

When the weather is extremely cold or extremely hot outside, it's a good idea to feed higher percent protein. In the summer chickens tend to eat less on very hot days, so a higher protein helps to satisfy nutritional requirements with less feed. In the winter chickens need higher protein to help alleviate the stresses of the season and the weather.

Chickens love treats, but don't give them more than 10 percent of their daily ration in the form of a treat. Treats may include meal worms, chicken scratch, table scraps, vegetables or fruits. Baby chicks should only consume treats labeled “for chicks,” such as Chicks Sticks, Chickie Garden Picnic and more.

## CHOOSING CHICKEN BREEDS

Choosing the right chicken breed is not a complicated process. As far as care goes, most breeds are the same. Some breeds are naturally friendlier than others. The more the chickens are handled, the friendlier they become.

Your standard breeds of backyard chickens are available at IFA Country Stores. They include, but are not limited to: Ameraucana, Buff Orpington, Sex Links, Wyandottes, Australorps, Barred Rocks and more. We have access to a wide variety of chicken breeds available for special orders.

## HOW MUCH SPACE DO CHICKENS NEED?

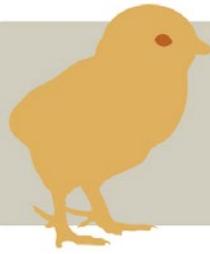
What space is needed to properly raise and care for chickens?

Chickens need a minimum of two- or three-square feet per chicken in the coop and 10 square feet per chicken in the run. More space is even better. Tight space confinement can lead to boredom, aggressiveness toward each other, as well as sanitary and health issues.

Chickens may roam freely in a larger space such as your backyard or pasture. However, take precautions to ensure their safety and protection from predators. Be aware that chickens



will eat whatever looks appetizing, including gardens and flower beds, so it may be a good idea to fence them to a specific area.



**CHICK HEALTH TIP: Pasty Butt can be caused by stress, change in temperature or lack of chick grit. Gently clean with warm water and towel. Make sure chick is completely dried off.**

soiled. Some people prefer to do a “deep litter,” in which they add more bedding on top of the old and only clean it all out once or twice a year. This allows the chickens to help in

## CARING FOR THE CHICKENS

In comparison to some pets, chickens are easy to care for and they can entertain themselves.

On a day-to-day basis, the most common task is keeping your flock supplied with feed and fresh water. Chickens do not over-eat so you can fill the feeder for more than one day. They do need plenty of fresh water to produce eggs and stay healthy. If the water is left unmonitored and unchanged for too long, bacteria may build up from the chicken’s mouths and debris in the water. In the winter it’s also important to keep the water from freezing. There are special waterers with built-in heaters to keep water from freezing.

It’s a good idea to keep the coop clean. The need to clean will depend on conditions such as wet weather and crowded coops. Replace bedding (straw or shavings) when it becomes

the composting of the bedding material. However, the best way to prevent dirty eggs is to maintain a clean coop. Cleaning the coop, floor, nests and perches on a regular basis will help to keep eggs clean.

Eggs should be gathered daily in mild weather and more often in sweltering summer and chilly winter months. They can freeze if not gathered. Always wash your hands with soap and water after handling eggs, chickens, or anything in their environment.

## THE ROOSTER QUESTION

Do you need a rooster for your hens to lay eggs? The answer is no, you do not. But if you want your eggs to hatch then you will need a rooster.

*Information for this article was provided by Martha Page, Assistant Store Manager, Poultry, Rabbit & Pet Dept., Riverton IFA Country Store; Sandie Shupe, Poultry, Rabbit & Animal Health Manager, Ogden IFA Country Store; and Jill Singleton, Bagged Feed Category Manager, IFA.*



## HEALTH TIPS WITH CHICKENS



Always wash your hands with soap and water after handling eggs, chickens, or anything in their environment.



Don’t let live poultry inside the house, especially in areas where food or drink is prepared, served, or stored.



Don’t eat or drink in the area where the birds live or roam.



Avoid kissing your birds or snuggling them, then touching your mouth.



Maintain a clean coop. Cleaning the coop, floor, nests and perches on a regular basis will help to keep eggs clean.



Cook eggs thoroughly. Raw and undercooked eggs contain Salmonella bacteria that can make you sick.

