

Feeding tips for chickens

•**Measure out how much food your chooks need.** Chooks are designed to eat all day so it is important to make sure they have access to food all the time. On the bags they call it 'Ad-lib' which means free access. Great for selling more feed, but you should know how much you should expect to feed them and make sure they have at least that much all the time.

All foods have a recommended feeding guide based on the weight and age and activity level of the hens. As a guide, the average food consumed is about 120g per hen per day. The more time they are allowed out of the pen, the less they will eat. The more scraps you give them the less they will eat. Don't forget though, that they need access to their food all the time and scraps alone are not enough to keep them healthy and happy. Look after you hens well and they will repay you with good eggs.

Once you work out how much to feed them get a feed scoop and weigh the food using your kitchen scales. Once you have done it the first time, you can mark the side of your feed bucket or scoop with a nikko pen for future reference. You should then only need to worry about measuring if you change feeds. If there is no food left the next day you need to feed them more.

If you don't have a feed scoop, you can usually get one from your feed store.

Measuring your chook's food is very important. You need to know how much your chickens should be eating. If you feed too much, you run the risk of it being spoilt or wasted and you could be wasting money. If you don't feed enough, your chickens will lose weight and be hungry. Hungry chicken will go searching for food and will eat more next time you feed them (more on this is regular meals).

•**Keep lots of clean, fresh and cool water available all the times.** Your hen's need access to lots of fresh, clean water all the time, but especially when they are eating. The water helps to soften the food and start the digestion process. On average 1 hen will need approximately 400ml per day. In extremely hot weather allow 3 time the normal usage. In hot weather, lack of water for a few hours can be fatal. This is so important for our climate. Lots of water.

•**Feed your chickens at regular times each day.** Chickens need to eat all day, so always have good quality feed in their pens. A good format to follow is to top their feed up in the mornings and let them out for 30-60 mins in the late afternoon.

Feeding tips for chickens (cont'd)

Usually they will go into their pen as night falls, or offer their scraps after their time out to encourage them back in.

Feeding at regular times allows you to monitor their eating habits. Not eating is the first sign of lots of problems so it is important to know if that happens. It is quite common for chickens stop eating if you keep changing their diet, weather is very hot etc.

Remove leftover scraps. Leaving lots of leftover food can attract flies & ants, at the least. Rats and mice will also appear for a free feed as well as other birds and chooks. The neighbourhood strays will be happy for a feed hurting your back pocket. Try not to have excessive leftovers all the time.

•**Reduce the amount competition your chooks face to get fed.** The more chooks you have the more competition they face when eating. If all your chooks can't eat at the same time, consider using more than one feeder. The best of friends will be more aggressive if they feel they have to compete for food. They will also eat more than they need to in case they lose the next battle.

•**Buy 10 get 1 FREE.** If you have lots of hens and they are eating quite a lot, you may be interested in buying in bulk. At our stores, we have a buy 10 get one **free** offer on any product. This doesn't always mean you need to fill up your garden shed and risk it all getting wet or going mouldy. You can take advantage by simply paying for you 10 items (and getting one free) and taking them (or delivery) as you need them. It's the best of both world's really buying in bulk and getting the freshest stock.

•**Worm your chooks every 3 months.** There is nothing that chooks love more than picking apart the dogs poo! So it is so important to keep up with intestinal worms. Untreated worms make your hens feel real crook and you don't want to be feeding the worms as well as the chickens. The smaller the pen the more the animals are forced to eat near their own poo so worming is more important to them than free range animals. It is also important to clean up their poo as much as possible to help worm control. You should regularly (every 3 months) use a wormer that kills like piperazine and Big L Poultry. It's easy to add to their normal drinking water for a few days. Over long periods, worms can build up resistance to wormers, so it is important to use a wormer with a different ingredient to wipe out this resistance. Just changing brands doesn't always change the ingredients, so ask for help to choose the right one for you.

Feeding tips for chickens (cont'd)

•**Chooks love bugs and worms.** A simple and free way to reward your chooks for laying well is to put some old bits of timber in the chook pen. Don't use treated timber like fence paling etc, just old logs and branches. After a week or so turn the timber over to reveal bugs galore. Your chooks will go nuts over them. Anytime your doing a bit of gardening a take out old plants, logs or have ant ridden pots, simply throw them into the pen and watch them go.

•**Only feed chook products to chooks.** A couple of important points about chook food that you should keep in mind. Firstly, the food for baby chickens is medicated to prevent a disease called coccidiosis. If you have laying hens eating the baby food as well, do not eat their eggs for 7 days after they have eaten it. Secondly, do not feed adult food to baby chickens. They need more nutrition to get them started in life and it causes deformities and death. And thirdly do not allow other other animals to eat chicken food and do not feed chicken food to other animals.

•**Never feed chickens** chocolate, coffee, avocado or rhubarb, as they are toxic to our feathered friends. Use good quality food and feed them well. Remember you are going to eat the eggs.

For all your Chicken Food products and help using them:

Citifarm @ Kelso
3/1463 Riverway Dr
Kelso, Qld 4815
Ph 4789 3868
www.citifarm.com.au

or

Len's Feed Shed
1 Mt Kulburn Dr
Jensen, Qld 4818
Ph 4751 5500
www.lensfeedshed.com.au