

Consider this...

Here are some things to think about before you buy your first chick...

- *Do you have time to actively care for a flock of chickens?*
- *Do you have a good area to house them?*
- *Regular handling helps keep them tame*
- *Regular observation is the best for preventing illness and injury.*
- *Are you ready to commit to the whole process, the whole life of the bird?*
- *What do you do if your "hen" grows up to be a rooster?*



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Backyard Chickens

Eggs-tra! Eggs-tra! Read this intro to keeping chickens



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Getting Started

Good Reasons to Own Chickens

1. Eggs!
2. Kitchen/garden waste consumers
3. Compost builders
4. Pets
5. Entertainment
6. Education
7. Garden pest control

Is this legal?

City Ordinances of Colorado Springs allow a resident to have up to 10 **HENS** per household. However, Home Owners Associations outrank the city on this one. If the HOA says “no” then it’s a “no.” Also, roosters are not allowed per noise ordinances.

Where do I begin?

Be a good neighbor... Let your neighbors know of your plans. Invite their children to enjoy the birds and help find eggs. Take them a few eggs when you have “eggstras.” Be considerate as you plan coop location. They value their home environment too.

Coop considerations

Location: Your coop should be visible from your house. You want to be able to keep an eye on your flock for their safety, make sure they are in... and any predators are OUT. Predators may include raccoons, foxes, coyotes, hawks, cat, even the family dog. Make sure your coop is safe from frisky/curious canines. They may become good friends with your hens...or they may not.

Room: How much room does one chicken need?

- * 2-4 square feet inside the coop
- * 3-6 square feet in the run area



The flock needs a dry, protected enclosure, roosts for sleeping, a covered outdoor run, and nest boxes.

Do you smell something? You shouldn't!

Regular cleaning of the coop and run should help keep odor under control. Wood shavings in the coop make clean-up much easier. Straw in the run keeps the birds entertained and waste easier to collect. Add all the “gleanings” to your compost pile. Your veggies will love you next year!

Coops come in many shapes and sizes, materials, and costs. Coops can be a very frugal endeavor or very pricey. Costs may range from free to hundreds of dollars. It's easy to use recycled materials in coop building.

Other considerations: You will need a power source to provide light as a heat source in very cold weather. Light can also help extend the laying season in the winter. Be sure the coop will be in a well-drained area to help prevent illness in your flock.

Choosing your birds

Consider purpose, size, breeds, age, and sources. If you'd like to start with day old chicks, know that these little ones need special care. They cannot be housed outside until they have their adult feathers. If you choose to raise your chickens from the chick stage, a brooder should include:

- A large container with high sides
- Heat lamp(s)
- Food and water containers
- Wood shavings
- Specially formulated food (Chick starter)
- Feed
Different blends for different ages/purposes
Different forms – pelletized or granular
Organic or conventional
Don't forget those fruit and veggie scraps!

Pecking order, cannibalism and stress

Pecking order” is a real deal! There's one in every crowd – one alpha and one henpecked. Too much stress can affect laying and stressed chickens may become cannibalistic.

Eggs

You can expect eggs once the pullet reaches around 20 weeks, but there is quite a bit of variance. Nutritional needs change and they will require a layer mix. Maximum production occurs in the first few years, though the bird may live much longer.

Operational Costs

There is no such thing as a free egg sandwich! Example: 5 hens can consume an average of 40# of feed per month. (Conventional and organic choices are available at Colorado Agri-Feed. A Joyful Noise Farm also sells a poultry blend). In return, your hens will lay 3-5 eggs per day in summer and 1-3 eggs/day in winter.