

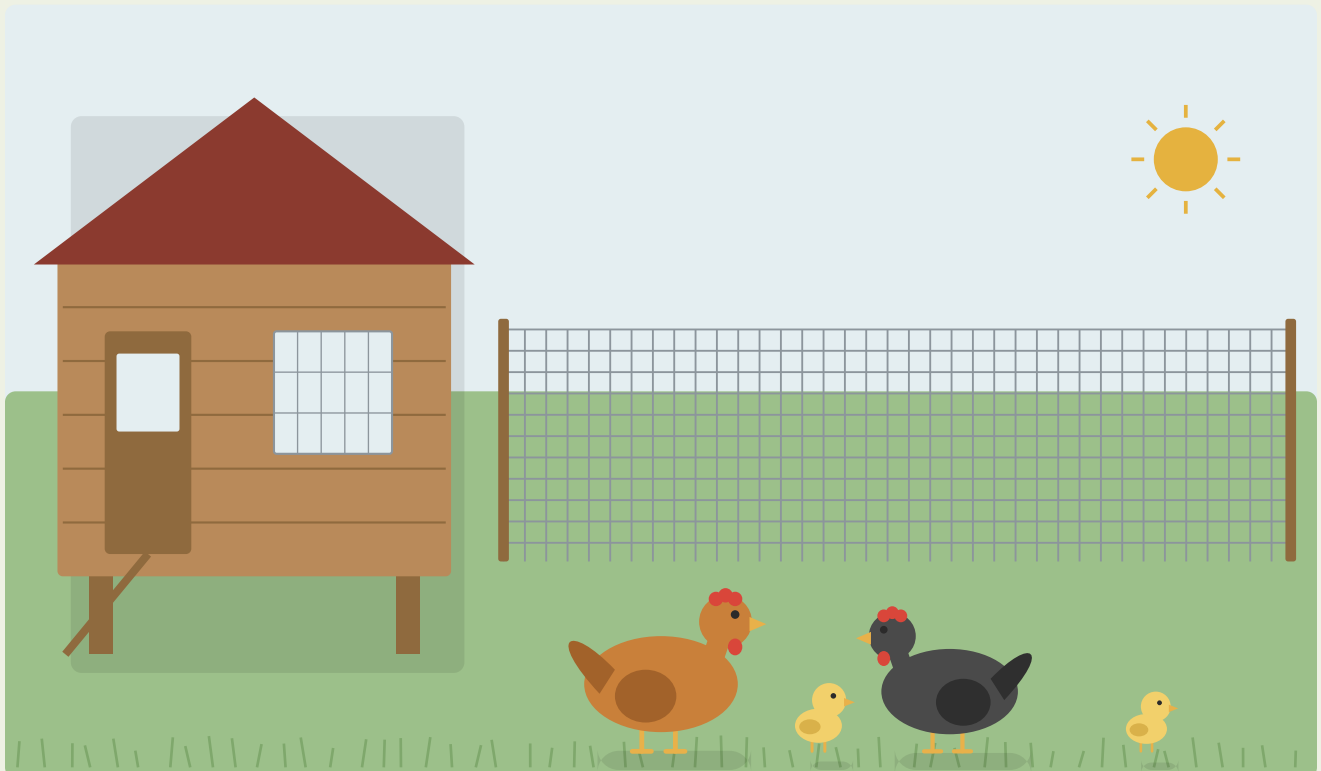
The First Flock Chicken Planner

Brooder to first egg: a calm plan for
your first backyard chickens.

CHICKS · COOP · ROUTINE · EGGS

An 8-week plan + six printable worksheets

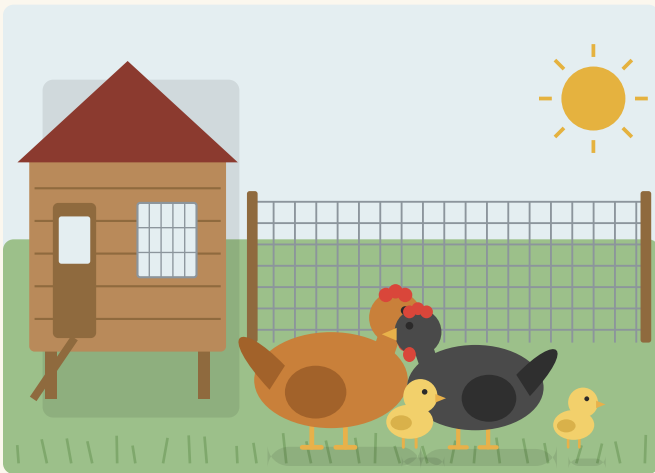
STUDIO SAMPLE · GENERAL POULTRY-KEEPING GUIDANCE, NOT VETERINARY ADVICE



Chickens are easy. The first eight weeks are the part people get wrong.

Most first-flock problems come from a cold brooder, a cramped coop or a routine that slips. This planner gives you the numbers, the weekly plan and a place to keep score.

University extension advice is refreshingly specific: keep week-one chicks at 90-95°F and drop it 5 degrees a week; give laying hens at least 1.5 square feet indoors, a nest box for every four, and 14-16 hours of light for year-round eggs. [1][2] The CDC adds the hygiene rules that keep a flock fun for a family. [4] This planner turns all of that into one calm routine.



By the end, you will have...

A local-rules and flock plan, a brooder log, a coop build checklist with the right numbers, a daily-weekly-monthly chore chart, an egg log and a flock record you will keep for years.

How to use this edition

Read pages 4-8 before the chicks arrive. Pages 9-16 take you from brooder to coop. Pages 17-23 cover eggs, seasons, fixes and a worked first eight weeks. Print the worksheets on pages 24-29 and keep the summary on page 30.

A STUDIO SAMPLE, READ THIS FIRST

Created by Forgewick in September 2026 to show the quality of our ebook work. It is general backyard-poultry guidance, not veterinary advice: breeds, climates and local rules differ, so check your local ordinance and ask a vet or extension service about vaccination, illness or anything that worries you. A partner edition is built from the creator's own flock, climate and methods.

Four sections. One happy first flock.

Follow the whole guide, or tap a section to go straight to what you need today.

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|----|--|----|
| 01 | Before the chicks | 04 |
| | Rules, flock size, breeds, coop numbers and the brooder kit. | |
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| 02 | Brooder to coop | 09 |
| | Week-one care, temperatures, feed by stage, moving out and coop setup. | |
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| | First eggs, egg safety, winter and summer, troubleshooting and a worked eight weeks. | |
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| 04 | Keep the useful tools | 24 |
| | Six printable worksheets and a one-page summary. | |
-
- The goal is not a perfect homestead. It is healthy hens, a routine you can keep, and eggs by winter.*

Check the rules, then pick a number.

Ten minutes now saves a difficult conversation later.

01 Local rules first

Many towns limit flock size, ban roosters or set coop distances from property lines. Check your local ordinance and any HOA or tenancy rules, and write them on Worksheet 1.

02 Hens only

You do not need a rooster for eggs. Most first flocks are 3-6 hens: enough eggs for a family, easy to house, and company for each other.

03 Count the space you have

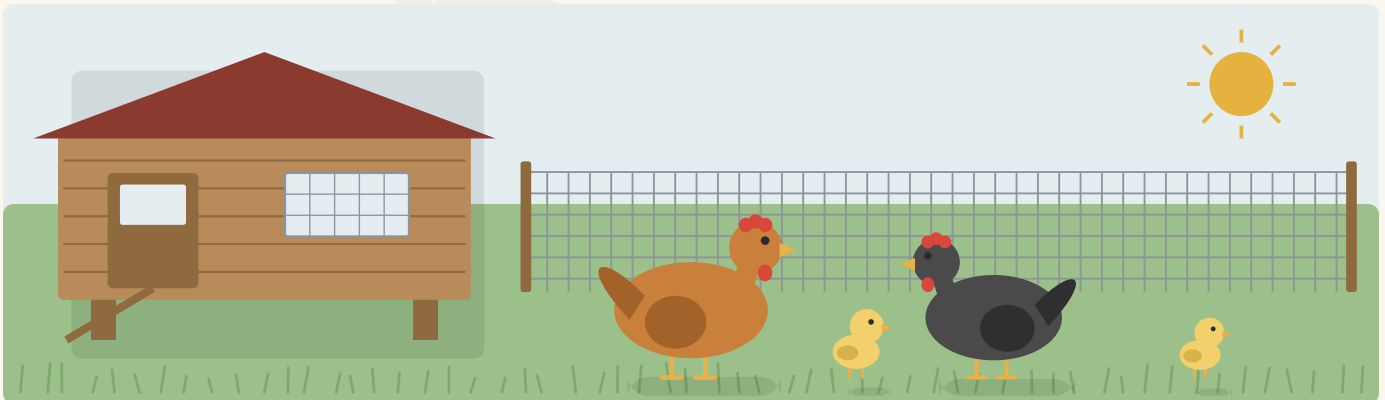
Use the numbers on page 6 to check the coop and run will fit before you buy birds. [2][3]

04 Count the time

Ten minutes morning and evening, an hour at the weekend, and someone to cover holidays.

05 Decide who is allowed to handle them

Children under 5 should not handle chicks or poultry; everyone washes hands after. [4]



Choosing breeds for a first flock.

Calm, cold-hardy, reliable layers make the first year easy.

Breed (examples)	Why beginners like them	Eggs
Australorp	Gentle, hardy, very productive; a classic first hen.	Brown, lots
Buff Orpington	Big, docile and fluffy; great with children; can go broody.	Brown, good
Plymouth (Barred) Rock	Friendly, curious, cold-hardy; steady layers.	Brown, good
Sussex	Calm foragers, easy to tame; good in mixed flocks.	Cream, good
Easter Egger	Hardy mixed-breed birds that lay blue or green eggs.	Blue/green, good
Bantams (e.g. Pekin)	Small, sweet, good for small gardens; smaller eggs.	Small, fewer

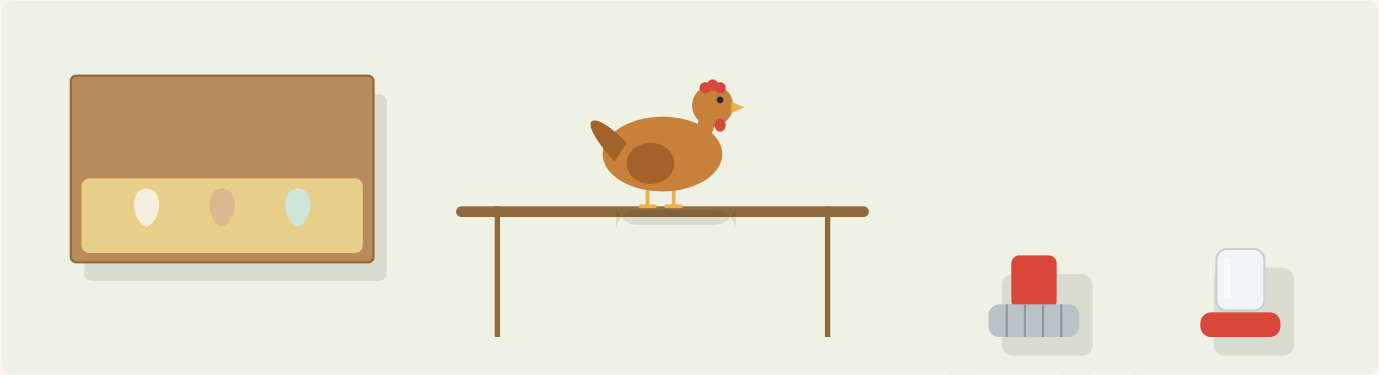
These are general reputations, not guarantees: individual birds and lines vary. Ask the hatchery or breeder what does well in your climate, whether chicks are sexed (pullets) and what vaccinations they have had.

MIXING AGES

Start with all your chicks at once, the same age, from the same source. Adding birds later means quarantine and careful introductions.

The coop numbers.

Space, roosts, nest boxes, feeders. Size the coop before you buy it. [2][3]



Item	Number to plan for	Source
Indoor floor space	At least 1.5 sq ft per hen with a run; 3 sq ft per bird is a comfortable first-flock target; 8-10 sq ft each if there is no run.	[2][3]
Run	As much as you can give: 8-10 sq ft per bird is a common rule of thumb; more means fewer squabbles.	[3]
Roosts	5-10 inches of perch per bird, about 2 ft off the floor, poles 10-12 inches apart, 2 x 2 lumber with rounded edges.	[2][3]
Nest boxes	One 12 x 12 x 12 in box for every four hens, below roost height.	[2][3]
Feeder and water	3 inches of feeder space and 1 inch of waterer space per bird; never more than 12 hours without water.	[2]
Litter	Dry litter 3-4 inches deep; remove wet patches as they appear.	[2]

Predators, weather and ventilation.

The three things a coop has to do, in order.

01 Keep predators out

Bury run fencing 6-12 inches or lay a wire apron; raise the coop a foot off the ground; use small-gauge wire (half-inch hardware cloth over windows and vents) rather than chicken wire; shut the pop door every night. [3]

02 Keep the air moving, not blowing

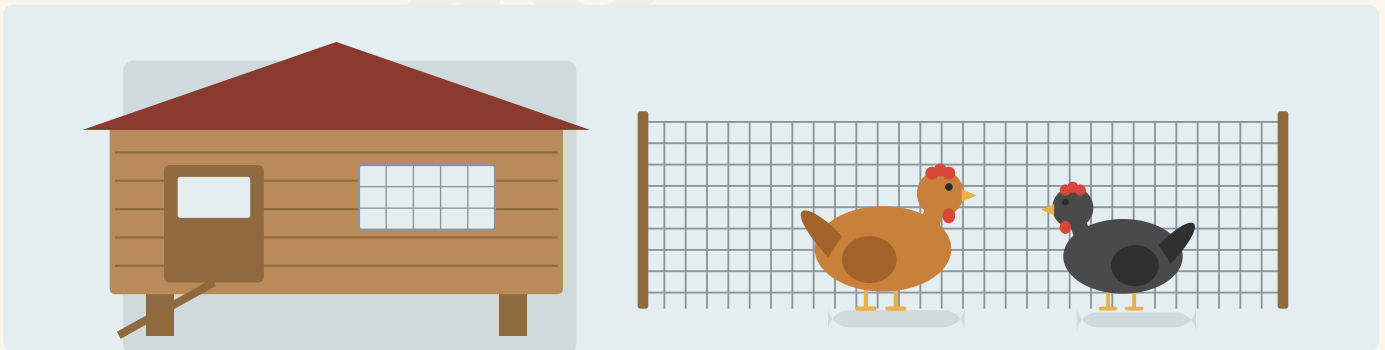
Vents high in the walls or gables let moisture and ammonia out without a draft across the roost. Damp, stale air is worse for hens than cold. [3]

03 Keep it dry

A roof overhang, a sloped floor that drains and litter you can change easily. [3]

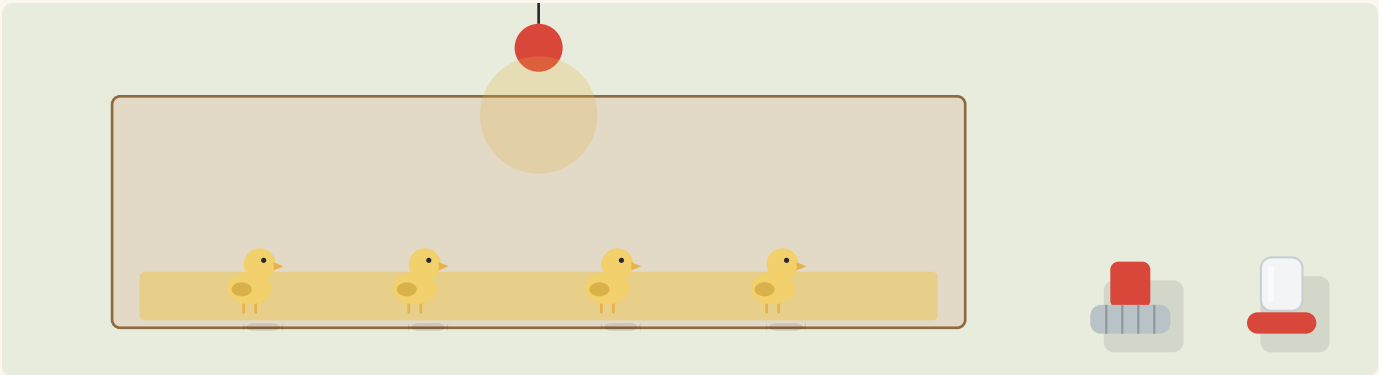
04 Make it easy to clean

A door you can walk or reach through, nest boxes you can open from outside, and a feed bin with a rodent-proof lid.



The brooder kit.

Everything the chicks need for the first six to eight weeks. [1]



Item	Notes
A draft-free box or stock tank	Large enough that chicks can move away from the heat; sides high enough to stop escapes. [1]
Heat lamp or brooder plate	Aim for 90-95°F at chick height in week one; a plate is safer than a lamp in a house. [1]
Thermometer	At litter level, 2-3 inches up, under the heat. Guessing is how chicks get chilled. [1]
Wood shavings	Not newspaper, cardboard or plastic: slippery floors hurt legs. [1]
Chick feeder and waterer	Small and low; a few clean marbles in the water dish stop drowning.
Chick starter feed	18-20% protein for the first 6-8 weeks. [2]

Ask your supplier about vaccinations and whether medicated starter is right for your chicks.

Day one to week one.

Warm, watered, fed, and left alone to settle.

01 Warm the brooder first

Run the heat for a few hours before the chicks arrive so the litter is warm. 90-95°F under the heat in week one. [1]

02 Dip each beak

Show every chick the water as you unbox it, then the feed. Clean water and feed available all the time. [1]

03 Read their behaviour, not just the thermometer

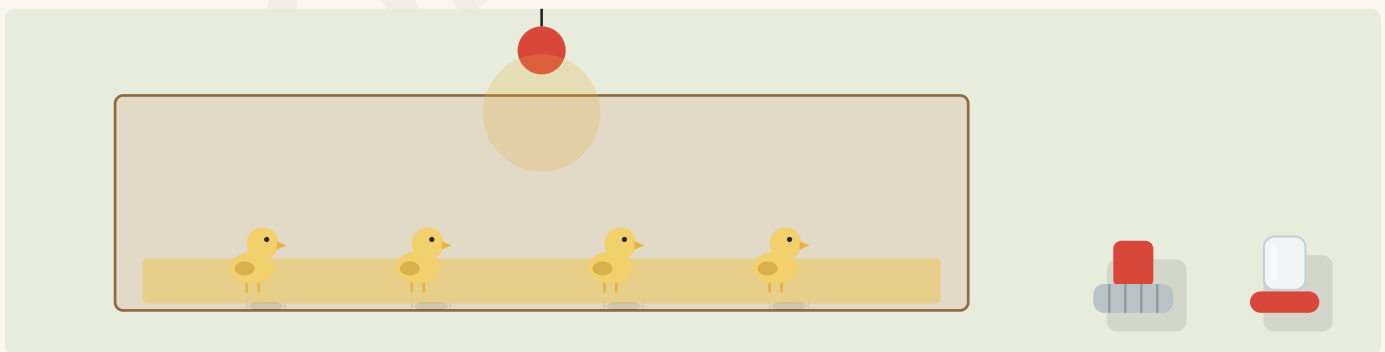
Huddled under the heat: cold. Pressed to the edges: too hot. Bunched on one side: a draft. Spread out and peeping softly: just right. [1]

04 Check bottoms daily

A dried plug of droppings on the vent (pasting) needs gentle warm-water cleaning; it is common in the first week.

05 Log it

Worksheet 2: temperature, behaviour, feed and water, twice a day. The pattern shows within days.



Temperature, week by week.

Five degrees a week, until the brooder matches the room. [1][5]

Week	Target at chick height	What you will see
1	90-95°F (32-35°C)	Fluffy chicks, sleeping in a loose group under the heat. [1]
2	85-90°F	More exploring, first wing feathers.
3	80-85°F	Scratching, dust-bathing attempts, tiny tail feathers.
4	75-80°F	Roosting on low perches; flighty; needs a lid.
5-6	70-75°F	Mostly feathered; heat off during warm days.
6-8	65-70°F or outdoor temperature	Fully feathered; ready for the coop once nights match. [1]

RAISE THE LAMP, DO NOT GUESS

Move the heat source up a few inches at a time and re-read the thermometer at chick height. If the chicks complain, put it back for a day. [1]

Feed and water by stage.

The protein changes as they grow. Do not rush to layer feed. [2]

Stage	Age	Feed	Notes
Starter	0-6/8 weeks	18-20% protein chick starter	Fine crumb; always available. [2]
Grower	6/8-18 weeks	14-15% protein grower	Lower protein while the frame grows. [2]
Layer	18+ weeks or first egg	16-18% protein layer feed + free-choice oyster shell	Extra calcium for shells. [2]
Treats	Any age, sparingly	Greens, a little scratch grain, kitchen scraps	Under 10% of the diet; grit if they eat anything but crumb.

01 Water is the most important feed

A hen without water for half a day can stop laying for weeks. Clean waterers daily; keep them off the litter. [2]

02 Store feed sealed

A metal bin with a lid keeps mice and damp out.



Moving out.

Fully feathered, nights warm enough, and the coop ready before they are.

01 When

Around 6-8 weeks, once the chicks are fully feathered and the brooder temperature matches the outdoor night temperature. Sooner in a warm climate, later in a cold one. [1]

02 Coop first, run later

Keep them shut in the coop for the first few days so they learn where home is; then open the pop door in the morning and they will put themselves to bed at dusk.

03 Low roosts to start

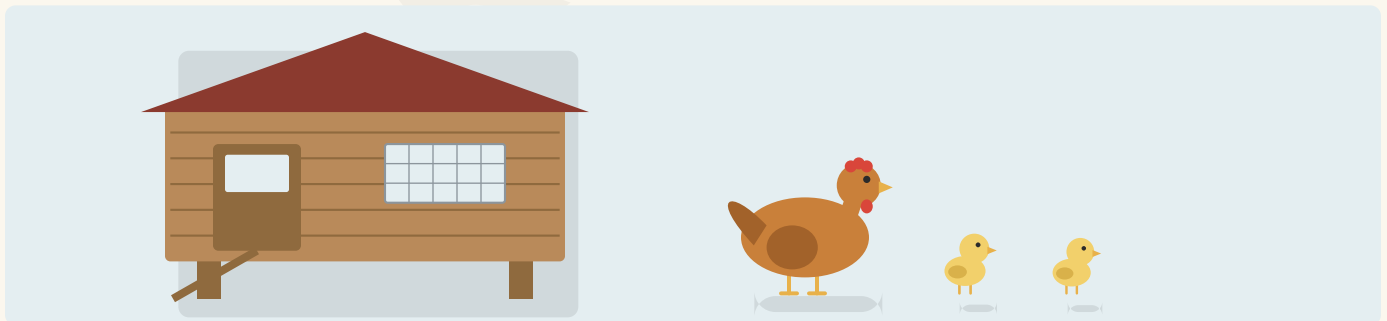
Young birds may sleep in a pile on the floor for a week or two. Fine.

04 Feed and water in the coop and the run

So nobody has to choose between shade and a drink.

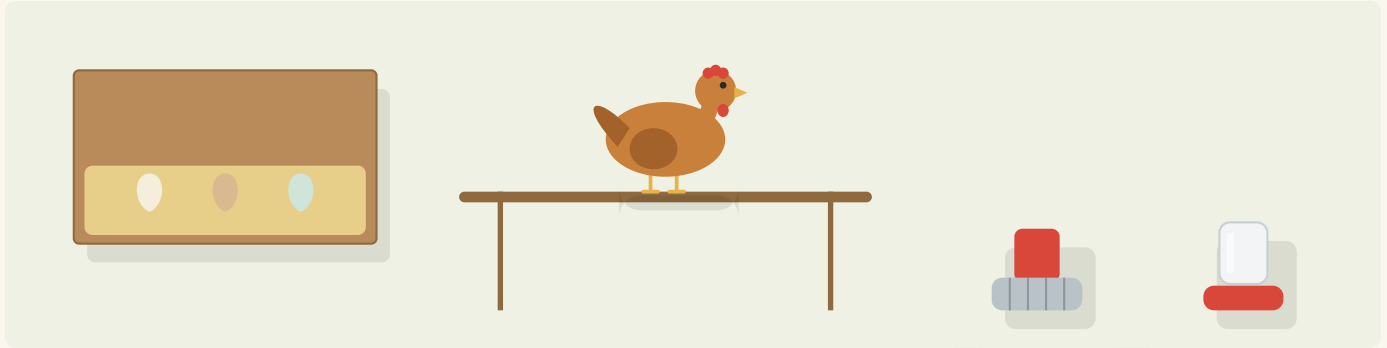
05 Watch the weather

A cold snap in the first week outside is the one time a temporary heat plate in the coop earns its place.



Setting up the coop.

Roosts, nest boxes, litter and the daily kit, in the right places. [2][3]



01 Roosts higher than nest boxes

Hens sleep on the highest thing available; if that is the nest box, you get dirty eggs. [3]

02 Nest boxes dim and lined

One per four hens, a few inches of straw or shavings, a fake egg to show them the idea. [2][3]

03 Litter 3-4 inches deep

Pine shavings or chopped straw; scoop under the roosts often, change fully when it smells. [2]

04 Feeder and water off the floor

Lip at back height keeps litter out. [2]

05 A dust bath

A shallow box of dry soil and sand, under cover, keeps mites and boredom down.

The routine.

Ten minutes twice a day, an hour at the weekend. This is the whole job.

When	What	Why
Morning	Open the pop door; check water and feed; count heads; glance at combs and droppings.	Problems show first at dawn.
Midday (optional)	Collect eggs; top up water in hot weather.	Warm eggs and thirsty hens. [4]
Evening	Collect eggs; count heads on the roost; shut the pop door.	Predators work at dusk. [3]
Weekly	Scoop under roosts; scrub feeder and waterer; refill dust bath; check fencing and latches.	Dry litter and clean water prevent most illness. [2]
Monthly	Full litter change; check birds for mites and lice at the vent and under wings; check feed stock.	Catch small problems early.
Seasonally	Deep clean; ventilation check; winter water plan; summer shade plan.	See pages 19-20.

Print the chore chart on Worksheet 4 and hang it by the door.

Hygiene, children and the house.

Chickens carry germs that do not make them ill but can make people ill. The rules are simple. [4]

01 Wash hands every time

Soap and running water after touching birds, eggs, feeders or the coop. Keep a bottle of sanitiser by the run for the days you forget. [4]

02 No kissing, no snuggling near the face

Hold them low, then wash. [4]

03 Birds stay outside

Not in the kitchen, not where food is prepared or eaten. [4]

04 Children under 5 do not handle poultry

Older children handle with supervision and wash afterwards; take extra care with older adults and anyone with a weakened immune system. [4]

05 Clean kit outdoors

Feeders, waterers and boots get scrubbed outside, not in the kitchen sink. [4]

06 Coop shoes

A pair that lives by the door and never comes inside.

A worked first eight weeks.

A fictional example of the routine with six chicks in a suburban garden. Adapt it; do not copy it.

When	What happens	Worksheet
Week 0	Checks the town ordinance (six hens, no roosters, coop 10 ft from the fence); orders six sexed chicks; builds the coop to the numbers on page 6.	1, 3
Week 1	Brooder at 93°F; one pasted bottom cleaned; all six drinking and eating.	2
Weeks 2-4	Lamp raised weekly; lid added at week 4 after a chick landed on the sofa.	2
Week 6	Nights above 65°F; chicks fully feathered; moved to the coop and shut in for three days.	2, 4
Week 8	Free-ranging in the run by day; routine running on the chore chart; feed switched to grower.	4, 6
Week 20-24	First small eggs appear; layer feed and oyster shell start; egg log begins.	5

Fictional teaching example. It does not describe a real flock or a guaranteed result.

The first egg.

Around 18-24 weeks, small and sometimes odd. Then they settle. [2][5]

01 Signs it is coming

A bright red comb, squatting when you approach, exploring the nest boxes, and a louder flock.

02 Switch to layer feed

At about 18 weeks or the first egg, with oyster shell in a separate dish. [2]

03 Expect oddities

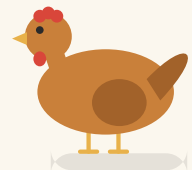
Tiny eggs, soft shells, double yolks and a few laid on the floor are normal in the first month of laying.

04 Collect often

Two or three times a day keeps eggs clean and unbroken and discourages egg-eating. [4]

05 Log it

Worksheet 5: eggs per day, and anything unusual. The pattern tells you about light, feed and stress.



Egg safety at home.

Clean, cool and cooked. [4]

Do	Why
Collect eggs often and throw away cracked ones	Dirt and bacteria get in through cracks. [4]
Keep nest boxes clean so eggs stay clean	Dirty eggs are the ones you have to wash.
Refrigerate eggs after collection	Slows bacterial growth. Follow your country's advice on washing; in some places washed eggs must be refrigerated, in others unwashed eggs are stored at room temperature. [4]
Cook eggs until yolk and white are firm; egg dishes to 160°F (71°C)	Kills Salmonella. Extra care for children, older adults and pregnant or immunocompromised people. [4]
Wash hands after handling eggs	Same rule as the birds. [4]

If anyone in the household is in a higher-risk group, ask a doctor about extra precautions.

Winter.

Dry and draft-free matters more than warm. Hens wear down coats.

01 Light

Hens slow or stop laying as days shorten. 14-16 hours of light supports year-round eggs; many keepers accept a winter break instead. If you add light, add it in the morning on a timer. [2]

02 Water

Unfrozen water is the winter job: a heated base, or fresh water twice a day.

03 Ventilation stays open

Moisture from breath and droppings causes frostbite on combs; vents high up, no drafts at roost height. [3]

04 No heat lamps in the coop

Fire risk. A well-ventilated, dry coop and a full crop at dusk keep hardy breeds fine well below freezing.

05 Deep litter

Build the litter up over winter and turn it; it composts and warms slightly.

06 Boredom

A cabbage on a string, scratch grain in the litter, a covered dry area in the run.

Summer.

Heat kills more hens than cold. Shade and water are the whole plan.

01 Shade all day

Move the run, add a tarp or plant something. Hens pant and hold their wings out when hot.

02 Cool water in several places

Refresh at midday; a shallow tray to stand in helps on the worst days.

03 Frozen treats

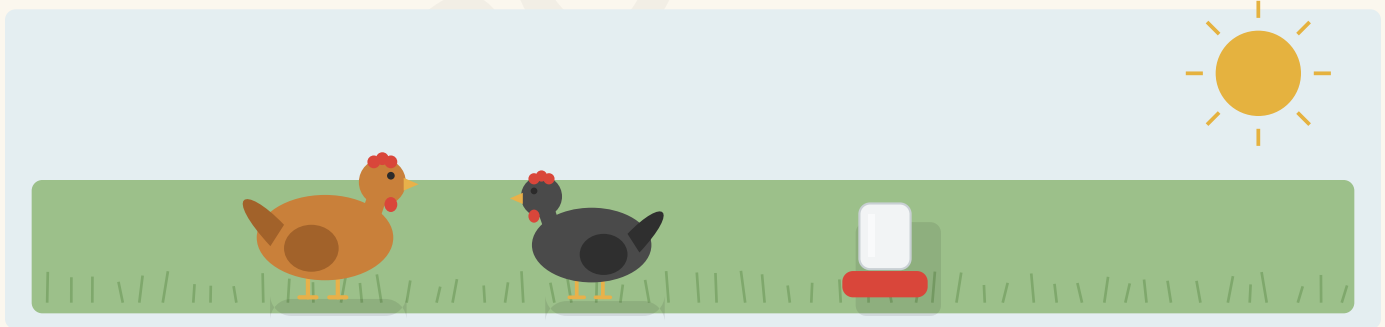
A block of frozen fruit or corn in a dish.

04 Ventilate the coop

Open every vent and window (behind hardware cloth); collect eggs more often. [3][4]

05 Watch for mites and flies

Hot weather brings both; check under wings and at the vent weekly; keep litter dry.



When something looks wrong.

Notice, check the basics, then ask for help early.

You notice	Most likely cause	Try next
Chicks huddled and peeping loudly	Too cold or a draft. [1]	Lower the lamp; block the draft; check the thermometer at chick height.
Pasted bottoms	Stress or chill in week one.	Warm water clean, dry, check the temperature.
Feather pecking, bullying	Crowding, boredom, too much light.	More space and things to do; check the numbers on page 6. [2][3]
Eggs stop	Short days, moult, heat, a water lapse, stress.	Check water first; then light and season. [2]
Soft or thin shells	Not enough calcium; heat.	Layer feed plus oyster shell; shade. [2]
Scaly legs, itching, pale combs	Mites or lice.	Check at night with a torch; clean the coop; ask a vet or extension office about treatment.
A bird hunched, fluffed, off food	Illness.	Separate her, keep warm, call a vet the same day.

This planner is not veterinary advice. A poultry vet or your extension service is the right call for anything beyond the basics.

Adding to the flock, later.

Not in the first year, ideally. When you do, quarantine and go slowly.

01 Quarantine new birds

At least two to four weeks away from the flock, checking for mites, breathing trouble and droppings.

02 See but not touch

A week of a wire divider in the run before mixing.

03 Mix at dusk, with space

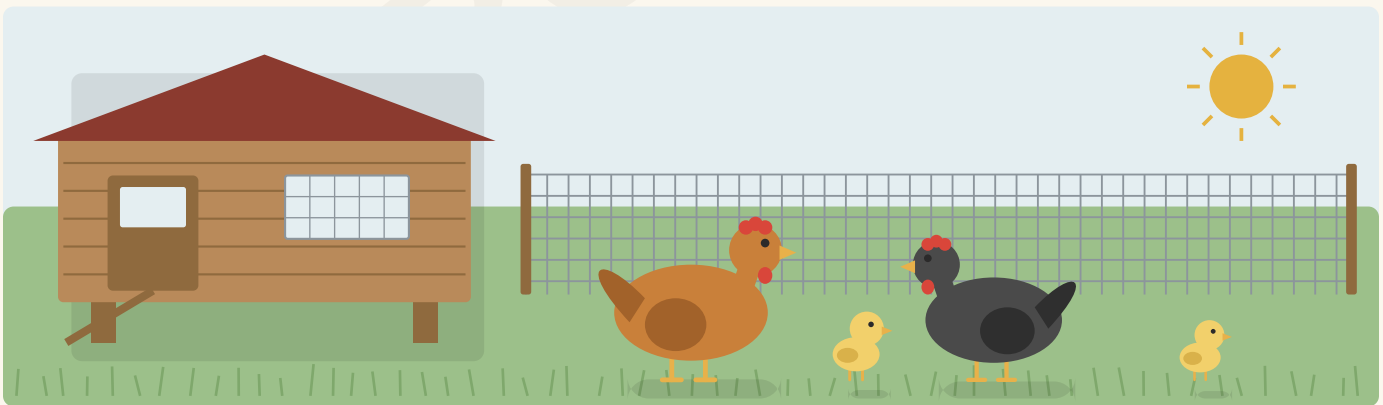
Add newcomers to the roost after dark; give extra feeders and hiding spots; expect a few days of pecking-order fuss.

04 Same size, same number

Two or more newcomers of similar size fare better than one small bird.

05 Keep the record

Worksheet 6: every bird, its source, hatch date and notes.



The notes that make you a good keeper.

Every flock teaches you something. Write it down.

Your climate's brooder timeline

When your chicks were really ready to go out.

Your egg pattern

Eggs per week by month; when the winter dip starts and ends. [2]

What each bird is like

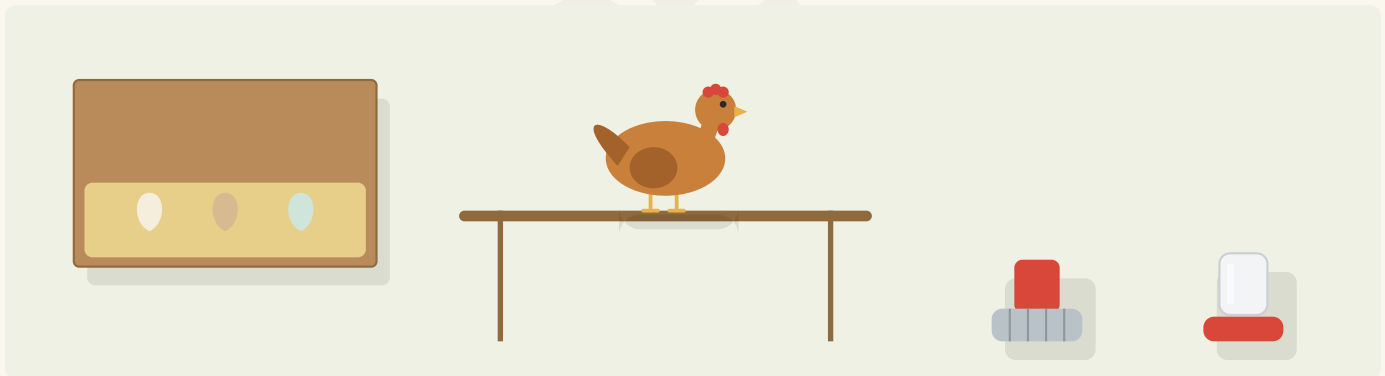
Who bullies, who broods, who lays the green ones.

What fixed what

Your own troubleshooting guide.

Your coop tweaks

The vent you added, the latch that failed, the feeder that finally kept the litter out.



Local rules and flock plan

Fill in before you buy a single chick.

LOCAL RULES (FLOCK LIMIT, ROOSTERS, SETBACK DISTANCES, PERMITS)

FLOCK SIZE AND BREEDS (AND WHERE THEY WILL COME FROM)

SPACE I HAVE (COOP SQ FT, RUN SQ FT) AND THE NUMBERS I NEED (PAGE 6)

WHO DOES MORNINGS, EVENINGS, WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS

BUDGET: COOP, RUN, BROODER KIT, FEED FOR A YEAR

Hens only for eggs. Children under 5 do not handle poultry. [4]

Brooder log

Twice a day for the first six to eight weeks. [1]

Date	Time	Temp at chick height	Behaviour (huddled / edges / spread)	Feed	Water	Notes

Drop the temperature about 5°F a week. Read the chicks, not just the thermometer.

Coop build checklist

Tick each number as you build. [2][3]

Item	Target	My number	Done
Floor space	≥ 1.5 sq ft per hen (3 sq ft comfortable); 8-10 sq ft if no run		
Run space	8-10 sq ft per bird		
Roosts	5-10 in per bird, ~2 ft high, poles 10-12 in apart, rounded 2 x 2		
Nest boxes	one 12 x 12 x 12 in per 4 hens, below roosts		
Feeder / water	3 in feeder + 1 in water space per bird		
Ventilation	high vents, no draft at roost height		
Predator-proofing	fencing buried 6-12 in or apron; coop raised 1 ft; hardware cloth on openings; night latch		
Litter	3-4 in dry litter; easy to change		
Dust bath	covered box of dry soil and sand		
Feed store	sealed rodent-proof bin		

See pages 6-7 for the reasoning behind each number.

Chore chart

Tick as you go. Hang it by the back door.

Task	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
AM: open, water, feed, head count							
PM: eggs, head count, shut door							
Water clean (hot days: midday too)							
Weekly: scoop roosts, scrub feeder/waterer							
Weekly: fencing + latches check							
Weekly: dust bath refill							
Monthly: full litter change							
Monthly: mite/lice check							

Routine on page 14.

Egg log

Eggs per day, plus anything odd. Collect often, refrigerate, cook well. [4]

Week of	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total	Notes (soft shells, floor eggs, broody)

A dip in autumn is normal. A sudden stop: check water first. [2]

Flock record

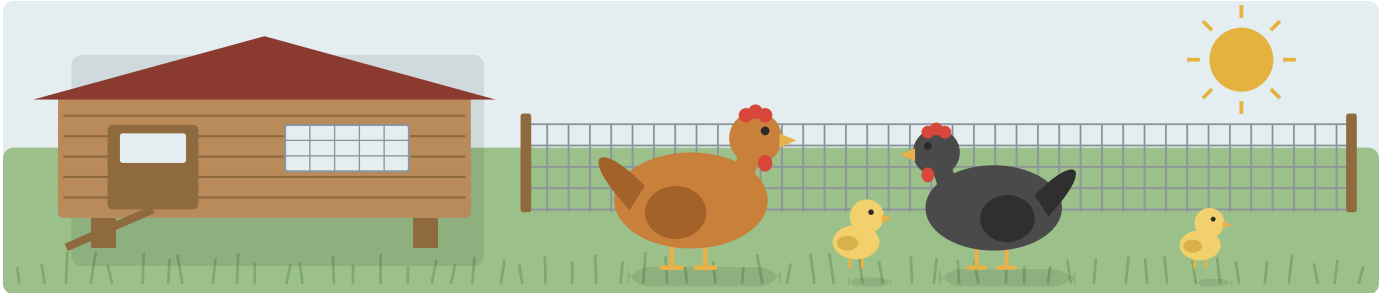
One line per bird. Keep it for the life of the flock.

Name	Breed	Source	Hatch / arrival date	First egg	Health notes

Quarantine any newcomer 2-4 weeks; see page 22.

First flock, at a glance.

Stick it on the fridge or save it to your phone.



■ Rules first

Check the local ordinance; hens only; 3-6 to start.

■ Brooder

90-95°F week one, minus 5°F a week; read the chicks; shavings, not paper. [1]

■ Feed

Starter 18-20% to 6-8 wks; grower 14-15% to 18 wks; layer 16-18% + oyster shell. [2]

■ Coop numbers

≥1.5 sq ft per hen inside (3 is comfortable); nest box per 4; 5-10 in roost each; vents high; wire buried. [2][3]

■ Routine

Open, water, feed, count in the morning; eggs, count, shut at dusk; scoop and scrub weekly.

■ Hygiene

Wash hands every time; birds stay outside; under-5s do not handle. [4]

■ Eggs

From ~18-24 wks; collect often; refrigerate; cook firm. [2][4]

■ Seasons

Winter: dry, ventilated, unfrozen water. Summer: shade and water everywhere.

The useful fine print

Sources behind the specific statements in this studio sample, and what this edition is and is not.

[1] University of New Hampshire Extension: Brooding and caring for chicks [Open the source](#)

Use wood shavings or similar dry litter, not slippery newspaper, cardboard or plastic. Keep the brooder at 90-95°F in the first week, measured about 2.5 inches above the litter under the heat source, and lower it about 5 degrees each week by raising the lamp until it reaches 65-70°F or matches the outside temperature. Chicks that huddle are cold; chicks that crowd the edges are too hot; chicks bunched on one side are in a draft. Dip beaks in water on arrival and keep clean feed and water available at all times.

[2] Penn State Extension: Management requirements for laying flocks [Open the source](#)

Chicks need about 0.5 sq ft each for the first 6-8 weeks; laying hens at least 1.5 sq ft of floor space each indoors. Provide at least one 12 x 12 inch nest box for every four hens, 6 linear inches of perch per bird on 2 x 2 boards spaced 12 inches apart, 3 inches of feeder space and 1 inch of waterer space per bird, and never let hens go without water for more than 12 hours. Feed a starter of 18-20% protein for the first 6-8 weeks, a grower of 14-15% to 18 weeks, then a layer feed of 16-18%. Pullets come into lay at around 20 weeks. 14-16 hours of light a day supports year-round production. Keep litter 3-4 inches deep and remove wet litter.

[3] Oregon State University Extension: Backyard chicken coop design (EC 1644) [Open the source](#)

Allow 8-10 sq ft per bird inside if there is no outdoor access, or at least 3 sq ft per bird inside with a run. Bury run fencing 6 inches to 1 foot to stop digging predators and raise the coop at least a foot off the ground. Build in as much ventilation as possible without drafts or predator access. Set roosts about 2 feet off the floor, 10 inches apart, allowing 5-10 inches of perch per bird, using 1-2 inch square lumber with rounded edges. Provide one 12 x 12 x 12 inch nest box for about every four birds. Sloped, draining floors and outward-opening doors make cleaning easier.

[4] CDC: Backyard poultry and Salmonella [Open the source](#)

Wash hands with soap and running water after touching poultry or anything in their area. Do not kiss or snuggle birds; do not let them into the house, especially where food is prepared; keep children under 5 from handling chicks and poultry, and take extra care with older adults and people with weakened immunity. Clean poultry equipment outdoors. Collect eggs often, throw away cracked eggs, refrigerate eggs after collection and cook eggs until yolk and white are firm (egg dishes to 160°F / 71°C).

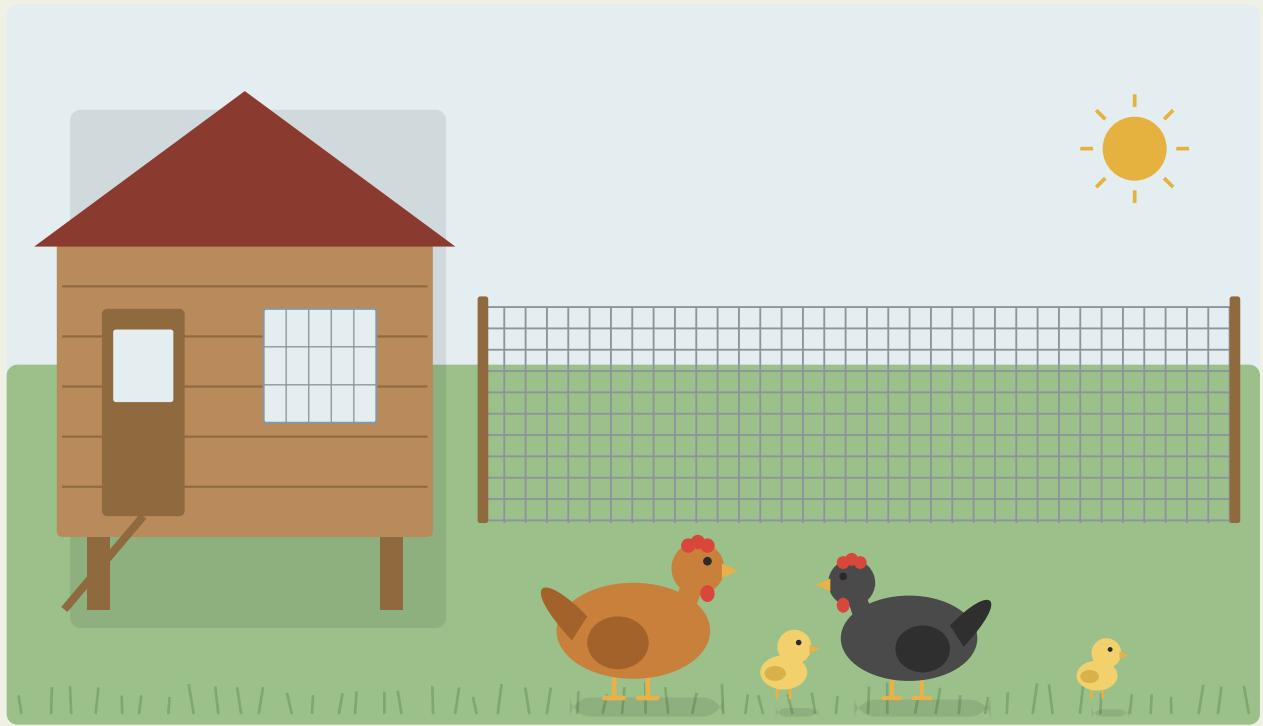
[5] University of Minnesota Extension: Raising chickens for eggs [Open the source](#)

Chicks need 90-95°F in the first week, reduced about 5 degrees a week over three to four weeks to around 70°F. Provide a minimum of 3-5 sq ft of indoor space per bird and one nest box per 4-5 birds. Hens begin laying at around six months and can lay for years, with peak production in the first two years.

About this edition

Written, illustrated and designed by Forgewick, operated by Haris Sohail. Studio Edition 1.0, September 2026. All text, illustrations and worksheets are original. General backyard-poultry guidance, not veterinary advice: climates, breeds and local rules differ; check your ordinance and consult a poultry vet or extension service for vaccination, illness and anything beyond basic care. Breed notes are general reputations, not guarantees.

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