

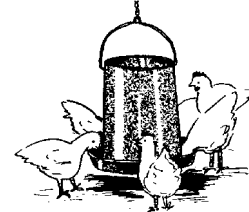


The University of Georgia

Cooperative Extension Service

College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences / Athens, Georgia 30602-4356

MARCH 2000



BACKYARD FLOCK TIP...

SIX THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN GETTING STARTED

Many people maintain a backyard flock of chickens to ensure a ready supply of fresh eggs and occasionally meat. Others keep chickens simply because it is fun. There are an almost innumerable number of breeds of chickens ranging from the small bantams up to full size fowl. The beauty of the feathering and body conformation of different breeds and the natural activity of chickens make poultry rearing an excellent hobby. Governor Roy Barnes raised poultry as a young man and reportedly looks forward to again rearing chickens after retiring from politics.

As with any hobby, poultry raising involves skills which are learned over time. Nevertheless, it is wise for the beginner to be aware of possible problem areas which should be addressed from the very first. The following points are offered in the hope that costly mistakes made by others can be avoided with your flock.

1. Animals - Nothing is more discouraging than having one's flock destroyed by dogs or other animals. Chickens are relatively defenseless against attacks and a sturdy fence or other barrier must be maintained to prevent predators from harming the flock. Clipping wings makes them even more vulnerable.

2. Shelter - Feathering makes chickens more resistant to cold than to hot weather. Thus, in the summer birds should have access to shade and be exposed to air movement. The roof of any shelter should be high enough so that radiant heat does not make the enclosure uncomfortable. However, exposure to air movement can be a detriment during the cold winter months and protection must be provided from cold winter gusts. Clear plastic or tarps hung around openings can usually provide sufficient protection during cold winter weather.

PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State College, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating.
The Cooperative Extension service officers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability
An equal opportunity/affirmative action organization committed to a diverse work force..

3. Accessibility - Any pen or enclosure to be used for poultry must be easily accessible to the person responsible for the care of the birds. If the facility is difficult to enter or get around in, proper bird husbandry becomes difficult. Manure may accumulate creating an unhealthy situation.

4. Disease Prevention - In addition to maintaining clean and dry premises, the poultry producer can reduce the risk of disease by limiting contact with other bird populations, such as migratory waterfowl. It should never be overlooked that one of the principal means of disease transference to poultry are human beings and access to the poultry pen should be limited.

5. Feed - It is rarely economical for small poultry producers to make their own feed. A typical balanced poultry diet consists of corn, soybean meal, meat and bone meal, limestone, phosphate, salt vitamins and minerals. Due to the small quantities needed and limited shelf life of some ingredients it is usually preferable to purchase a mixed feed formulated for your birds (starter, grower, layer, etc.) from a reputable distributor.

6. Water - As a rule of thumb, chickens drink twice as much water as they consume in feed. All birds need a fresh clean water supply, but oftentimes waterers are not cleaned on a regular basis. This is especially critical in the summer months when microorganisms multiply rapidly in the waterer. Some flock owners like to place one tablespoon of household bleach in each gallon of water to prevent the growth of bacteria and other microorganisms.

The most critical aspect of caring for the backyard flock is simply good judgement. We wish you the best of luck with your flock, and are sure you will derive a lot of pleasure from this hobby.



Nicholas M. Dale
Extension Poultry Scientist

County Extension Coordinator/Agent

****Consult with your poultry company representative before making management changes.****

“Your local County Extension Agent is a source of more information on this subject.”