

Keeping Chickens Newsletter

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www.KeepingChickensNewsletter.com



July 2010

Hi

Welcome to my Keeping Chickens Newsletter.

Thanks to everyone who has sent in their keeping chickens tips, stories and photos etc. - as usual, if you have anything chicken related (tips, photos, stories, questions, coops etc.) you'd like to share in future issues of the newsletter or blog posts then just email news@self-sufficient-life.com and I will do my best to answer / include them.

Best Wishes
Gina

Subscriber Letters



Beverley : I hatched out some eggs from my own chickens this spring...they are plymouth rock hens for moms and a rhode island red dad...I made a brooder in my porch using a small plastic paddling pool...some 24 inch chicken wire and ¼ inch dowling to support the wire...this was easy to clean and gave them plenty of room! Now I have 7 turkey eggs in the incubator...wish me luck! Bev

Lisa : Love your site, I found it after looking around for ways to fight my increasing rodent population. I saw a fatty ratty in the barn this morning but decided to go with the good old snap traps. I just have to be careful my loose chickens don't find them first, or my cat. I'll take any tips trying to rid my property of foxes. They decimated my little friends the past 2 years since my Coonhound died. I adopted another and she's doing a great job, in fact the chickens have moved across the property and nest near her dog house now. Also, in the US it's possible to adopt chickens from your local county animal control facility as many homeless chickens are euthanized. Please pass this along. Thanks again, Lisa in Georgia

Bonnie : The silliest method I heard of on peeling hard boiled eggs which does NOT work is to add baking soda to the water to raise the PH level, then crack and peel just the ends, then blow through one and the egg is supposed to pop out! Well what a joke! All I got was a headache from all that blowing!



Everett : I love your news letter! It is always full of information that helps me. I got my first chickens in April and I built my first chicken house. I have 16 chickens now and I might get a few more a little later.



200 Eggs a Year

Chicken Care Guide

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Jim : Just a bit of info. to pass along. This spring my flock of 25 Speckled Sussex egg production almost came to a halt. They had been through the molt but still were not laying. As it happened I had my dog at the vets at much the same time this was going on. I knew he had worked with large commercial poultry growers in the past. I explained things to him and after a couple of questions to me “Mold” was the first thing he said, “you have a mold in your feed”. Some molds will mimic estrogen so it's like you are feeding birth control pills to them and they stop laying. Following his advice I changed feed, sanitized everything and within a matter of 10 days - 2 weeks laying went from 2 - 3 eggs daily to almost full production. After about a month things were back in fine shape. I never would have thought of a mold and others that I have talked with have never heard of it either. So if any others are having a similar problem this may be a starting point for you. Boy Mother Nature sure can do some goofy things! ☺

Linda L. : Hi been reading this chicken letter for over 3 yrs, lots of good info. Joyce, how do you let a chicken come into your home for 5 seconds, let alone hrs.....& keep it from pooping all over the place. I have 30 chickens. One I had to protect from the drake I had & the roosters as she saw her buddy hen get drowned by the drake. Unfortunately my first 12 chickens happened to come with half roosters. Chickens & ducks will inter-mate. However ducks will relentlessly pursue a chicken & even trap them in water to breed with them. So this hen followed me around & insisted on roosting on the porch for 3 months until I could get the drake & large roosters back to the farm. Once all the large roosters were gone I could get her back to the flock. Still have 4 bantam roosters, she seems ok with that. But don't understand how one can train a chicken from dropping almost with every step they take. Please fill us in I'm sure many of us would like to know too. ----*I don't know how it's done...Anyone?*☺

Kathleen : Thank you so much for the newsletter, I have just adopted 4 hens and one big rooster.. Problem is one hen keeps breaking and eating the eggs, is she lacking something in her diet, if so, what. Thank you...New Mom

My Reply : *Egg shells are a source of calcium so it may be possible that she is (or was) slightly lacking but very often egg eating begins by accident - an egg gets knocked onto the floor or stood on and they find that they like the taste and then will just get into the habit. There are a few popular methods for stopping egg eating, mostly involving some kind of trickery such as false eggs, or making them taste bad - I had a little bit on egg eating in the April 08 Newsletter which may help*

http://www.self-sufficient-life.com/April08/keepingchickens_aprilnew_page13.htm

Hopefully a few less than pleasant experiences when eating the eggs will convince her not to continue. Good luck.



Dee : I am so happy to be getting your newsletters! I thought I was the only ‘wierdo’ around with my 12 babies. lolol. I grew up raising my flock until I was 18 and moved on to college. I have waited 20 years to get my girls again!!!! In April I adopted 12 of the cutest chicks in the world! (I bet you hear that from every proud momma). Here is a picture of my cat Rox and my week old sweetie. They didnt seem to mind each other one bit. It was cute to watch them play.





My husband and I quickly started on their 'coop' aka "Taj Mahal". Here is a picture of it finished, and yes, it has pink curtains and blue sky's on the ceiling. Yes, pink nest boxes, each one decorated to their likings. It has been such a ball raising them. They are now 12 weeks old. I can not imagine life without them now! Dee Waters Ohio

Jacqueline : We have been just decided to get some chickens and ducks as we have plenty of room in our garden here in Spain, so find your newsletter very informative and quite funny at times. We have the run, my husband is now adapting a plastic shed and that should be ready for our new girls in about a week. One question, I would like them to be free range eventually but we have three dogs and a cat can you advise on how to integrate them all? Will send photos when all up and running. Keep up the good work. Regards. Jacqueline Graham

My Reply : *I have a video on my blog which features a bit of dog training with a chicken <http://successwithpoultry.blogspot.com/2008/04/dog-training-with-chicken-reducing-prey.html> From the subscriber letters I get there are a lot of people who do have all their pets getting along nicely together, and sometimes it seems to have just happened naturally but unfortunately it is not always the case. Cats are not usually a problem to grown chickens, but will often snatch a chick if they get the chance to. A swift peck on the nose from a disgruntled hen is often enough to put a dog back in its place, but you cannot always rely on that being enough. Dogs can be unpredictable - many will get along with the chickens, even watch over them, but others have a much stronger prey drive and cannot be trusted. You probably won't know how your dogs will react until they do. Generally with dog training it is usually easier to train them individually so I would guess that it would be best to assess each dogs reactions individually (and with a lead on).*



Colleen : Over the last few weeks my husband has been building a new henhouse and run which our two granddaughters have eagerly anticipated for the feathered residents. The design inspiration had come from what we'd read in your very informative newsletter magazine and further ideas were gleaned from various websites and books.

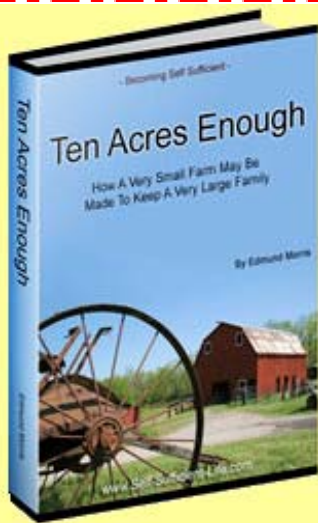


I've attached a few photos during the construction of the 'Chilton' (...acronym for Chicken Hilton). It has 3 perches inside at different levels and also 3 cosy little nesting boxes. It's actually big enough to stand up in and to house about 15 or so hens. A full-width closeable shutter on the east side gives added ventilation and coolness in the summer. Their glass window and little hutch doorway faces north with a ramp for them to get down to the ground. The flooring is cheap vinyl laid over plywood and covered with a proprietary brand of chopped cardboard litter for ease of cleaning and composting. He built their run of 6' high chicken wire netting that encompasses all of the northeast downward sloping corner of our 3/4 acre property where we have a copse of seven large Pawlonia trees rimmed with tarata (lemonwood) hedging. Their run measures 12 metres by 10 metres so they've got a very large sunny & shaded area to scarp and scratch around.

We bought eight 18-week old brown-shaver pullets from a breeder. Our grandies have named them all and each one is identified with a different coloured band on either their left or right leg. From what we've read and from what we're experiencing ourselves, they're just so darn cute to watch as they busily go about their hen stuff...quite therapeutic and relaxing actually. Even at this stage they're reasonably tame and don't mind being stroked or picked up. We've had them 3 weeks now and are averaging 5 eggs a day, so we're now looking forward to payback time with our very own home-produced, free-range, organic eggs. Regards.....Colleen

Christine : Hi Gina. I just joined your newsletter, cause I just purchased 4 chickens and I don't know a thing about raising them. I have 6 Nigerian goats and can tell ya lots about them but not chickens. My question is they have started laying eggs, they are brown eggs and very small. Will the eggs get bigger and is it safe to eat the first eggs that they have layed. (by the way the goats love the chickens they sleep together, when they don't want to go in the hen house). Any help I would really appreciate.

My Reply : *It is normally safe to eat their first eggs, the only thing you might want to double check is if they were eating a medicated chick feed instead of a layers feed at the point they started laying (even then most eggs are fine, but it's best to double check the manufacturers instructions just in case). Pullets do tend to lay eggs in a variety of different shapes and sizes for the first few months until they get the hang of things and then their eggs will be pretty consistently 'normal' ☺*



Ten Acres Enough

How A Very Small Farm May Be Made To Keep A Very Large Family

Ten Acres Enough is a self-sufficiency classic written by Edmund Morris, and is his personal story of his journey from city businessman to farmer. In this book Edmund details the first 3 years of his 'back to the land' experience; how he selected the land, what he chose to grow, the animals he raised, planning and managing his fully stocked kitchen garden and the layout of his fields. He also passes along many tips for planting and growing his selection of fruits and vegetables as well as sharing his experiences with cows, pigs and chickens. He explains honestly what worked for him and what did not.

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Jeff : Attached are a couple pics of our new “Coop de Villa” and we have since added a “Love Shack” and both have large pens for the Americanas and Brahmas to run about. Our flock is very happy and just about to start laying. Jeff Rollings, Turks & Caicos Islands



Mary : Wow This site is really great thank-you for getting it up & running. In preperation for getting my chickens we went on the cheep & recycled every thing we could. For the Hen house we took a recycled crate from one of the local oil containment operations, We had some used 1x1 boards to make the frame for the yard, took gallon restaurant jugs for food & water. Did buy new wire & will use leftovers for the garden. My youngest grandson is going to help me paint the house a funky color I'm really excited as today is the day I pick up the 6 chicks (am borrowing the cat cage to bring them home) Many thanks Mary.

Linda : Thanks for your “Keeping Chickens” news letter. It's entertaining as well as helpful. I appreciate being able to read tales from other novice chicken keepers like my husband and I. We are very new to raising chickens, but things have gone relatively well in the year we've had our little flock of 5 hens. We have a cute little chicken coop with all the amenities to keep chickens happy. We've fed them what we've been advised - commercial chicken mash with some scratch grain as well as greens from our table and garden. We have the mash available all the time, and give scratch grain twice a day. Lately, these little girls have decided not to eat the mash. We've done the 'smell' test to check for rancid odor, but it seems fine. We also purchased a new bag of 'pellet' type. They don't seem interested. When I throw out the scratch grain in the morning and evenings, they quickly devour it and beg for more. Since we live in the inner-city, we don't often let the girls run free to forage for themselves. Occasionally, we let them join us as we dig in the garden. Naturally they love the worms, bugs, seeds and whatever else they find, but it's a rare treat. We have only two feed stores in our town and the feed products are the same brand or I'd change. Recently, the gals have started eating the bedding straw. This can't be good! Help please! Thanks, Linda from Idaho

My Reply : *It might be worth trying to stick to the pellets instead of mash if you can (as they are refusing both they probably don't have a preference) - chickens can be pretty picky with mash and often a lot is wasted as they sort through it trying to pick out the bits of corn etc. Straw can be a good bedding for them if they don't eat it but for now it may be better to change to a different bedding type as straw is hard for them to digest and so can build up in their crops and cause problems (hay should also be avoided for the same reasons). If you change their bedding to shavings and don't give them any scratch for a few days that should limit their options and encourage them to go back to their 'normal' feed. If they still seem iffy throwing some of the pellets on the floor like scratch may also help trick them into eating it as their instinct to dive for treats is pretty strong. A dollop of plain yoghurt on top is another thing that can sometimes work as a motivator but chickens are little piglets in disguise so I think if there is little chance to be choosy for a while they should get back to eating their 'proper' food.*

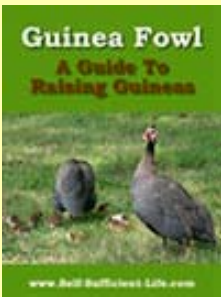
John & Sue : We are quite new subscribers but now look forward to each news letter. We are surprised to read that Mary's girls don't like Tomatoes! In our experience the Girlies always go for anything red, even my ankle when I knocked it on a flower tub and didn't realise it was bleeding slightly! I ended up on antibiotics myself but I still love them! We find if we mix some tomato etc with their pellets they will scratch away for them before tackling their correct breakfast of layers pellets. John & Sue Devon UK

Christy Weick : Patrick's show animals have increased, he has 1 show heifer (Hereford) and 2 market hogs (Land/York). His flock of chickens has increased back to 40 chickens/pullets. He's hatched out 12 guniea eggs, with only 2 not being fertile. Patrick was down to 2 male gunieas and 1 hen. He traded them for 3 Americana pullets and 1 old hen that looks like Jany without the orange paint. Jany had to help Patrick paint a few months back and her feathers took in paint.



Patrick's newly hatched ringneck pheasants : Cheep and Peep

Now he's the proud owner of a mating pair of ringneck pheasants. The owner before us said that she (female pheasant) would lay her clutch and then roll the eggs out of the nest. Then they started to collect her eggs and tried to incubate them. So the mating pair was moved from the old owner's house to ours. He has named them Pat (male) and Camo (female). They know their names and are doing well and Camo laid her 1st egg within the first few days. I've got them on gamebird mash and it's in a different shed so Patrick would not give them the chicken feed by accident. They do get some scratch and we feed them a little every day and not every other day like the old owner. We had 3 out of 4 of Camo's eggs to hatch so far. We buried the 1st little pheasant yesterday evening, I guess since it took him 48 hrs to come out of his shell, the power loss and the temperature drop he was just too weak. But he did help the other 2 crack out.



Guinea Fowl
A Guide To Raising Guineas
www.Self-Sufficient-Life.com

Guinea Fowl

A Guide To Raising Guineas

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Before and After photos : pecked and sore + clearing all the crawlies out of a pot before I plant it up

Marilyn : Hi Gina, thank you so much for the news letter, I look forward to it every month now. We rescued 4 ex barn hens in February, they arrived terribly pecked and poor. They are quite lovely now although one is getting pecked on her chest still. We keep using the anti-peck spray but it is still happening. I will try the blue spray I used for their injuries when they arrived. I have just read Margit's letter. We have just had a similar problem, 'Edie' the one that still gets pecked laid a soft egg quickly followed by her normal egg. She was very hunched and was making a terrible noise. We were so worried but thankfully it turned out ok. I had wondered if she had a blocked crop, and discovered a wonderful tip, which hopefully I will never need to use. Anyway, I read that if your hen has a blocked crop, feed her a good lot of white fishing bait maggots. The maggots will eat through the blockage and she will have digested the maggots by the morning. I enclose before and after pictures of our lovely girls. Goldie, Edie, Phoebe and Little Hen. Thanks again for the news letter, it's lovely to belong to a worldwide hen loving community. Marilyn - Hampshire UK

Ingrid : I was wondering what age is the appropriate age to introduce my 5 week old chicks to my existing flock which is a year old?

My Reply : *It usually helps if they are reasonably close in size, so probably 3-4 months +, but you may want to try earlier than that and see how it goes - there are no definite rights and wrongs, and sometimes it just naturally will go smoothly (fingers crossed). I have a few general tips for adding to flocks here :* <http://www.keepingchickensnewsletter.com/mixingflocks.htm>



Nancy : Here is our young Buckeye rooster, Boscoe, telling our barn cat Spaz a thing or two! Thanks for the great newsletter...Nancy in NE Ohio

Sue : Thanks for your newsletter, it is always interesting to read about other people's 'chicken experiences'! I have ex-battery hens and they are fabulous, free ranging the garden and chasing my three lurchers if they dare to go too close! In you latest newsletter you had a story about 'flushing' a hen with diluted molasses. I have not heard of this before, it seems to have been very successful with the particular hen it was used to treat, but could you let me know how much molasses/how dilute to make the mix to dose an unhappy or egg-bound hen? Many Thanks, Sue, Essex, UK

My Reply : *1 pint of Molasses to 5 gallons of water is used by some as a laxative to flush out toxins ('treatment' is free choice for four hours, and then go back to normal plain water). In theory an egg-bound hen would not need to be flushed for toxins, but it may have proved beneficial for hydration purposes as one of the potential reasons for a hen to be egg-bound is dehydration (the part which moves around the egg as it is laid is too dry and stuck to it preventing it from getting out). Electrolytes (which also includes calcium - required for muscle retraction) would probably have worked just as well and would be a more common solution for cases of egg bound caused by dehydration. The general TLC and somewhere warm and comfortable to relax in also probably helped ☺*




Step by Step chicken coop plans for four different coop designs and sizes - including this midsize chicken coop for up to 4 chickens.

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Ed : We have had 4 chickens for 1.5 years now. They have a great life & we love watching them. Never a dull moment with chickens. They're always running nowhere, digging for food or taking a sand bath. Anyway. We decided to adopt another two chickens when this was agreed with my son, we assumed that the old chicken house was too small to house 6 chickens. So we (ie me) had to build another hen-house. With no real prior experience with building, I was lucky enough to had a great boss who let me take lots of nice timber home.



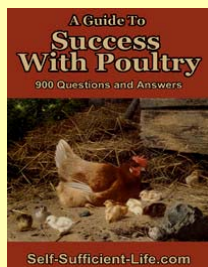
First we build the co-op. After the 4 hens were settled into their new house we thought it was time to get the other two new birds. (Even after the move, we still received fresh eggs every day. No stress I suppose). Okay, so just a quick drive to the market in Belgium & my son picked out two young birds. We separated them at first, it took two weeks before we decided that the new birds were big enough to fend for themselves. I have to say that every night we would put the

new birds with the other four into the he house & in the morning they would have their own space in the co-op separate from the others. They now live very happy together all six of them. There is still some pecking but it's generally a control peck. Thanks to your news-letter I know several tricks about introducing new birds to the flock. Keep up the Great job you're doing. Take care Ed

Suz : Gina love your newsletter I have a question I hope you can answer if not thats okay do you know anything about frizzles. I have a rooster but no hen – question - if I put him with other type hens will I get the frizzles when hatched or do I have to have hen and roos the same. I really like the look of them. Thank you for any advice in this matter. Suz from Kansas

My Reply : *I don't know very much about them, but one thing which I did read that kept in my mind is that "two frizzles make a frazzle" (broken, brittle feathers) so I think to get frizzles when breeding you do only want to have one with the frizzle genes. As far as I understand it the chicks will then have the frizzle genes to pass on, but apparently do not always grow frizzled themselves, although hopefully some of them should. Good luck ☺*

Margaret : Enjoyed the newsletter. Our son brought home one hen (not sure what breed she is). She laid one egg the first day and a week later one egg. From the beginning we put her in a cage and she evidently didn't like it. She managed to get out of the cage and flew over our 6 ft fence. The next day we found her in the front yard and eventually caught her in a neighbors tree. Next time she flew out again and we opened the gate the next morning and in she went. She seemed to love scratching all around our yard and in the mulch pile. We clipped her wings first time she flew out and a second time also, but evidently not far enough even yet. After we had her that first week she laid 4 eggs inside a little shed in the yard, behind the mower. Then no more eggs and she has escaped, yet she flies in now each week, just once a week as far as we know. When we see her we go out and feed her and make sure there is water and she eats and drinks. I can't imagine where she is going but our Henny Penny always comes back for the corn and water. I am surprised she is still alive as we live by a State highway which is busy and though in the country, is still city to me. Been interesting, but doesn't look as if we will be keeping her forever. Margaret Good, Kyle Texas



Success With Poultry

Practical Advice on Eggs, Feeding,
Chicks, Housing, Diseases, Incubators and
Brooders, Turkeys Ducks and Geese

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Day of Arrival

Amy Brownson : After reading everything from your most current newsletter, I feel I must add a “thank you” for having this wonderful newsletter! I have a small flock (25 of various breeds - bantams included) of pullets from McMurray Hatchery and am particularly taken with my blue Andalusian pullets. I drive everyone I know crazy with talk of my chickens.



“Happy”

All 25 have names and my favorite one, Happy (one of my four blue Andalusians - and the only one of four that is actually blue), comes to greet me and flies up onto my shoulder to “roost” on me if I stay long enough.





My buff-laced Polish (Pickles)

This is my first flock of chickens and I am smitten! It's also my first pet (and I've had lots!) that gives me something in return of tangible value - eggs! Also, I feel I should share some pics since I enjoyed seeing everyone else's so much.



My chicken coop construction and fencing (I did the fencing myself)

Thank you, and thank you to all the other readers who share their knowledge and experiences! It is nice to share with others who are equally enthused and I love reading about others' stories!



My chicken cake made for me by my fellow chicken enthusiast mother-in-law in honor of my May 31st birthday (I'm on the right, my mother-in-law on the left).

Thank you, and thank you to all the other readers who share their knowledge and experiences! It is nice to share with others who are equally enthused and I love reading about others' stories! *Amy Brownson*

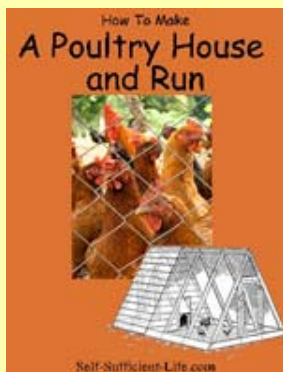


Roberta : I always enjoy reading your newsletter and love seeing all the pictures provided. I thought your readers would enjoy seeing these photos. My dad and I built the Coop ourselves and the picture of the rooster was taken spontaneously while I was out snapping shots of our newborn baby calves. ☺





Sue : Dear Gina, I got the answer to my question of will a Silkie hen hatch and care for quail. The answer is she is doing great! The eggs started hatching today. Here is a picture. Sue from central Pennsylvania.



How To Make A Poultry House and Run

Traditional "A Frame" Poultry Ark and Run design.

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Andrea : Dear Gina, Your newsletter is inspirational. We currently have 3 backyard hens (2 Ameraucana's and one bantam), Wendy, Lady Gray and Tinkerbell. We are grateful for all the information from your readers and you. I had written you about the Bantam being picked on by the other two in the portable coop and movable run (in photos), and you kindly responded. She solved the problem herself by flying out in a panic when I was checking the nest box for eggs. She chose our garage as her home and she is now our one free-range chicken and we have no idea where her tiny eggs are (probably squirrel food!). She is very savvy about avoiding our Jack Russell terrier. We are in a suburb in upstate NY where backyard chickens are not legal. Luckily, all our neighbors know and say they enjoy seeing and hearing the hens. The oldest hen has taken to trying to crow (not good for clandestine chickens) so that is my wake-up call to move the Ark and she quiets down hunting for treats in the grass. We get two green eggs a day and tons of entertainment from our girls. Keep up the great work. Andrea





Kate : What a great find this newsletter is! I am a newcomer to chicken keeping, only 10 days experience so far! Luckily I got my 6 hens from a great local supplier, who answered all my questions and set me up with great confidence. I have 6 different hybrids - Rhode Rock, Columbian Blacktail, Speckledy, Blue Haze, Coral Nick and Light Sussex. They have settled in very well and 4 are laying already. Within days, they were following me around and having their wheat treats from my hand. The June newsletter mentioned wasting time by watching the girls in several articles - and although I do spend a lot of time watching them and being near them, I justify it as getting to know each other and their regular health check! I find it a very relaxing and rewarding time in my daily schedule. Keep up the good work - I will be waiting for each new newsletter, and in the meantime will ration the back issues so that I can thoroughly enjoy them. Kate - County Durham UK

