

Keeping Chickens Newsletter

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<http://successwithpoultry.blogspot.com>



October 2007

Hi

Welcome to my Keeping Chickens Newsletter.

As it's getting closer to the colder weather, this month I thought I'd mention a few winter tips. As usual, if you have any chicken related questions (or even tips, stories, coop photos 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.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter!

Best Wishes
Gina

Some Tips for Winter

Here are a few winter tips I have picked up along the way that you may find useful. This is by no means exhaustive. There is no definitive right or wrong way for wintering your chickens so these are not “this is what you should do...”, just ideas that you can take or leave. Some of these tips involve the use of electricity in the coop. Electricity in a coop can be helpful but is not essential (afterall people have been keeping chickens for hundreds of years without it). If you do use a heat lamp for the coldest nights, then it is obviously essential to make very sure it is fixed somewhere securely and safely. A dry, draft free coop (but still ventilated) will be the most important part of keeping your girls (and boys) warm. Chickens will acclimatise to colder weather and can create a lot of warmth just huddling together. You will need to consider the temperatures you get in your area and work within that (i.e. nicely insulated coops and cold hardy breeds if you are in a very cold area). Bantams will feel the cold the most. Extra insulation in the coop and extra dry bedding can often make a coop surprisingly cosy, even in the coldest of climates. Fully grown chickens are actually surprisingly hardy and can cope with around 30 degrees above zero. A little extra corn (as a supplement to their normal nutritionally balanced feed) can give them additional internal warmth.



Photo By Gord Webster

Chickens very often don't particularly enjoy the snow or rain, but they do need fresh air and exercise. Unless it is blowing up a storm, if given the choice, they will normally prefer to venture outside (even if for only a little while) rather than stay 'cooped' up inside for the whole day. In many respects you can for the most part trust your chickens to take care of themselves. Many a keeper has gotten soaked through to the skin trying to round up their chickens in bad weather – only to find them dash right back outside again as soon as their back is turned! Unless there is a reason they do not want to go back to the coop (such as a predator) they will probably not venture far from the coop, and may even just stay inside of their own accord if they feel it is too cold for them or raining hard. In cold weather a covering of thick plastic/tarp over the top of all or part of the run can leave them with a snow-free place to run around. Some unroll bales of hay into the pen to give them a bit of insulation from icy ground. Others will just shovel snow out of the chickens way so they have a little bit earth to walk on and peck at.

Keeping your chickens water from freezing is probably one of the biggest challenges for those in the very coldest climates. One solution is to use a red heat lamp near the water to help stop it from freezing – another option is to use something like the heated dog water bowls which are intended to keep an outdoor water bowl free from ice all fall, winter, and spring down to temperatures to 20° below zero Fahrenheit (but use less electricity than a 30-watt light bulb!) They are available in most pet stores for around \$25 and can also usually be [ordered online here](#).

Ventilation in the coop (whilst still avoiding drafts) is important - even in the very coldest days. The chickens breathing will create moisture which needs to get out or it could result in a damp atmosphere inside the coop, possibly leading to air quality problems and frostbite. If the coop door is situated in a position where it will get rain blown in or nasty drafts, then you may want to put some sort of protector at the door if it is to be left open. Your chickens can learn to push their way through. Some people have had success with strips of rubber, an old towel, pond liner – even a dog flap!

Those with large combs and wattles are most susceptible to frostbite (unfortunately not an uncommon problem in very cold climates where it can regularly be below freezing). It usually affects just the tips, but whole combs have been known to get frozen. Rubbing vaseline or another kind of petroleum jelly onto a frostbitten comb should soothe it, but there is usually not much that can be done to fully restore the look of the frostbitten bits (which tend to go black and possibly scab).

The use of artificial heating and light can help with continued egg laying through the winter (a cold hen will use most of her energy keeping warm in very cold weather). This is purely a matter of personal choice and there is a good argument for allowing the 'girls' to have a natural rest. The idea behind it is to artificially create a 'normal' day. A white lamp would help make up the 'daylight' hours (usually for approx. 14 hours in total) and a red one at night for warmth. A 'normal day' type of temperature would be around 50F-60F (evenings obviously cooler, but comfortable). Without a light and heat they may slow down egg production, but they probably wouldn't stop altogether. Some breeds will carry on laying quite well regardless of the weather.

The following breeds are some which are known to continue to lay at a relatively good pace during winter:

Chantecler
Delaware
Dominique
Faverolles
Jersey Giant
New Hampshire Red
Orpington
Plymouth Rock
Rhode Island
Sussex
Wyandotte



© Photo By Thaddeus Quintin

Subscriber Photos



Looking for a friend...

Vonda Dunn : I wanted to know if anyone out there can tell me if my blue cochin bantam is male or female - it is 9 weeks old. It makes some sort of noise, but not really a crow. I would like to find it a friend of the opposite sex, when I know what it is. I noticed that the female cochins have combs and things under their chins, anyone out there with info, or a friend to buy would be great!!!

Quick Tip : Hard To Peel Eggs

Freshly laid eggs are nearly always hard to peel when boiled. Aging them for a week or so would probably help, but if you just can't wait that long then try this method : Put them in warm water and bring them up to boil. Once boiling, put a lid on the pan, and turn the heat off and leave them for ten minutes.



"Bulger" at 20 weeks

Christine Rainville : We ordered 10 barred rocks and 10 Delaware pullet chicks from Murray McMurray. We were surprised when they sent 17 "extra for warmth" Red Star roosters. We ended up with one of them being a possibly White Rock "Whitey", and "Bulger" ended up being a barred rock Rooster. The rest of the roosters have been sent away, but we did keep "Bulger".

Recent News : Ancona Wins Best In Show at The Royal Show 2007

Although today primarily 'show' birds, Ancona's were considered one of the best egg laying breeds in the UK between the 1st and 2nd world wars, and are still highly valued as such amongst many backyard poultry keepers.

A video from the Royal Show 2007 (including an interview with Philip Smedley, owner of the winning Ancona, and the Veterinary Surgeon for the GB poultry Club talking about avian flu) can be viewed on my blog here:

<http://www.self-sufficient-life.com/1/RoyalShow>



First Eggs.

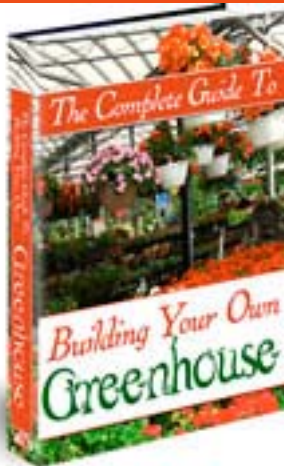
Valerie Rose : My chickens JUST started producing! Yesterday we found two eggs in their coop... My kids are THRILLED!

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How To Make A Catching Hook



Take an ordinary broom handle and attach a six-foot piece of No. 10 steel wire to it. Bend it to the proper shape (see illustration). It makes it much better and more rigid if you reinforce the main wire with a second wire of like size, as shown in the illustration. You can bend and thus increase or diminish the size of the hook to correspond with the size of fowl's leg which you are attempting to catch. Slip the hook quietly down toward the fowl, and quickly reach it around the shank just above the foot, and the fowl can then be gently drawn towards you and its foot released. Be careful not to injure its legs.



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The Complete Guide to Building Your Own Greenhouse

Building Your Own Greenhouse
By Max Clarke

Picture this. Out your kitchen window there's three feet of snow on the ground and the thermometer reads five degrees below zero. You have guests coming for dinner and you really want to impress them.

With a smile, you walk to your fridge and pull out fresh lettuce, home grown tomatoes, fresh radishes and green onions. These veggies aren't pre-washed, treated with preservatives or vacuum packed for extended shelf life!

And no, you didn't get them from the grocery store where they were shipped from south or north of the equator (depending on where you live.) So where did they come from? Your own backyard!

Listen, it's amazing what inroads we've made in the growth and delivery of fruits and vegetables. Take a stroll through the produce aisles of your favorite supermarket during the winter months and you can find plums from Chile, avocados from Guatemala and ready-made salads sealed in plastic.

BUT, if you enjoy truly fresh fruits and vegetables take the step and learn how you can have these tasty commodities year round!

Building your own greenhouse may sound like a daunting task, but it really isn't.

Whether you are an avid gardener or a gardening wannabe, there is something for everyone in **The Complete Guide to Building Your Own Greenhouse**

- What is a Greenhouse
- How do they store heat
- What are the different types of Greenhouses and how do they differ
- All about Greenhouse flooring - what type of floors are available and which should you use
- Cooling and ventilating your Greenhouse
- Understanding heating methods
- Energy requirements for your Greenhouse
- Good fuel sources
- What about watering your Greenhouse
- What you can plant
- What are cold frames and hot beds
- Accessories and equipment
- What supplies will you require
- About that all important subject – lighting

Hey, we aren't saying that you will ever become a world famous conservatory. But you CAN become the envy of the neighborhood and grow your own fruits, vegetables and flowers.

Just one click away and The Complete Guide to Building Your Own Greenhouse you can discover how to build your own greenhouse.

Just picture yourself biting into fresh, juicy tomatoes that you grow yourself any time of year. Or crisp leafy salads covered in your favorite dressing.

Imagine having your very own fresh bouquets adorning your home every day of the year. And, without paying a florist to deliver them!

Subscribers Special Offer – Click Below to order 'The Complete Guide to Building Your Own Greenhouse' ebook in PDF format for just \$11



Or visit <http://www.self-sufficient-life.com/greenhouseoffer.htm>

Subscriber Coops



Thanks to Duncan Parker for sending in photos of his 'little barn' chicken coop.

"My Daughter gave me a pair of chicks that she couldn't keep and this started a series of events that resulted in my building the barn. I had no idea what was required to keep chickens so I started looking on the Internet and ran across your site which I found very informative.. As the chic's were small, I kept them in a box for some time while I decided what I could build to house them permanently. This little barn was what I came up with.



It is two story with a roost and two nests up stairs with water and food containers on a screened floor on the bottom. The roof comes off for cleaning. Eggs are collected through the loft door. Access to the ground floor is through the large barn door.



The chickens, Hen-rieta and Chic-ita, have become great pets, have started to lay eggs, and earn their keep scouring the yard for bugs. I close them in each night and allow them to roam free in our two acre yard during the daylight hours. Their value as bug catchers in the yard and garden more then pays for the extra clean up I have to do on the patio.



They spend most of the hot part of the day roosting in the shade on the back porch steps watching our inside cat who doesn't quite know what to make of that big red bird looking in at him.”



Thanks to Wendy Christides for sending in these photos of her newly completed chicken coop (and residents!).





Thanks to Robert Hall for sharing these photos of his moveable chicken coop.



"I would like to share a few photos of our new "Hen House". It was made on an old boat trailer that allows us to relocate it every couple of weeks. I have included storage, nesting boxes, auto feeder, and now auto water. With a electric netting fence around the coop, most worries are removed. The house can be closed up every night and the girls are ready in the morning. It has been great fun building it with my wife and kids.

Those that don't keep chickens think it is a little over the top. Maybe it is but with 'style'... "



Thanks to Mary Westrich for sharing these photos of her coop and Seramas.

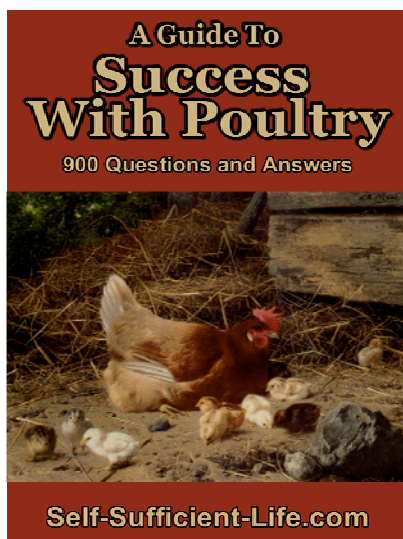
"Here are a few pix of my Seramas. They are the world's smallest chickens. I've raised them all from eggs, except for a few my first hen hatched - she's a good mother!"





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Advertisement



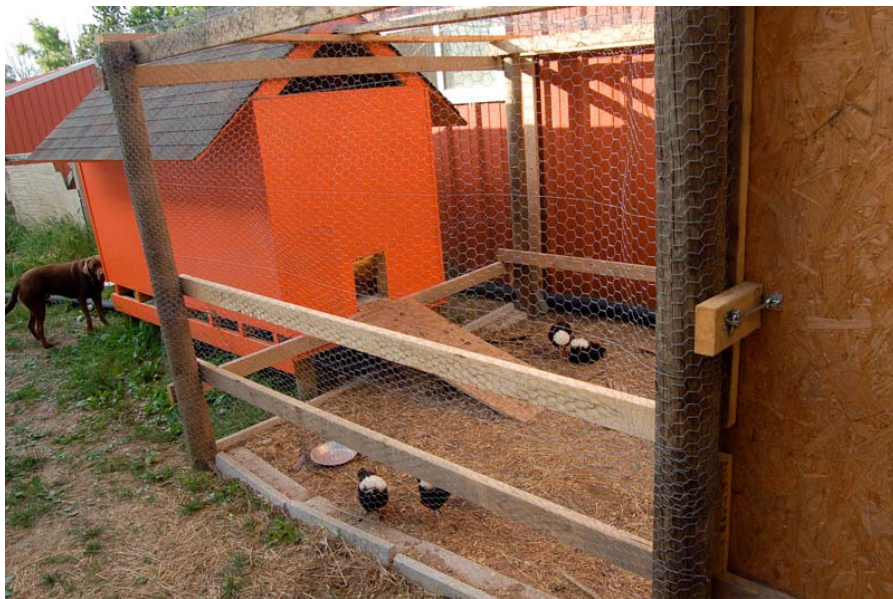
Over 900 Questions and Answers containing Practical Advice on Eggs, Feeding, Chicks, Housing, Diseases, Incubators and Brooders, Turkeys, Ducks and Geese.

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Thanks to Danielle Witkowski for sharing these photos of her growing chicks and the coop created by her Dad.





Thanks to Lynsey and Gregg Malone for sending in these photos of their family.

"We've really enjoyed your newsletters and website. We turned the shed my husband built into a hen house when we got our first round of chicks and ducks last March. Now we've expanded our group to 13 hens, 1 rooster, 6 guinea hens and 6 ducks. Hopefully next year we'll get some babies! We're trying for ducklings right now, but so far no luck. Our hens are only 7 months old so they've just started laying, but none are broody. Wish us luck and thanks for the great site!"



Bear In My Chicken Coop

By Jeanne Fingar



Photo By Jeanne Fingar - blackdiamondguestranch.com

I'm amazed with the bear pictures, unbelievable.

I was there and I am still trying to believe it myself. In the middle of the morning. Bears usually are not usually such bold predators. No one has ever heard of eating live meat. 'Cept for a few humans from rare instances. The picture is a little out of focus due to the shaking I was in fact doing as my anger was more powerful then my fear, and I am deathly afraid of bears. I love my little chickens more strongly then I fear bears. Picture is proof.

I bet the chicken's had a bit of a shock!

I hatched those chicken eggs from the mail - rare dorkings, and I raised them in the house with our 5 dogs and 2 cats. They did not raise a fuss as they were pretty quiet. I think that is how most of them managed to stay alive. If they had started squawking and flying they would all be dead. He ate a couple and the rest are doing fine.

In those kind of instances, do you have to report it to anyone?

The governing agency around here is Fish Wildlife & Parks Rangers who have a Bear Tactical Team Unit who there main job is to relocate trouble bears. . Last we heard he was seen roaming up near Cabin City (5 miles east of here).

What did the bear do after seeing you when you took the picture?

As you can see he was climbing out of the back as I was standing next to it. I had no idea he was around again. After I took his picture with the flash, he was not afraid and started to charge me, then one of the chickens ran beside me and he went after her. I was out of there quick. I didn't want him to get me. I watched him slowly walk up the hill from down by the barn. I was going to lock myself in the storage area until he left. That is what I did.

I'm presuming it was a black bear?

Yes, black bear. This guy was just a 150 - 200 pound range and 1-2 years old. He was a yearling bear or so. He is now a little pest and should grow to be a big pest. Do Bears really eat chickens. Well this one does. On a note the chickens have been secured in a new chicken condo for the time and we don't see to many bears during hibernation. Thank goodness!