

Contents at a Glance

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Part I: Choosing Chickens</i>	7
Chapter 1: The Joy of Chickens.....	9
Chapter 2: Basic Chicken Biology and Behavior.....	21
Chapter 3: A Chicken Isn't Just a Chicken:Your Guide to Breeds.....	39
Chapter 4: Buying Chickens.....	55
<i>Part II: Housing Your Flock</i>	73
Chapter 5: Choosing Your Housing Type	75
Chapter 6: Designing and Constructing a Coop.....	99
Chapter 7: Coop, Sweet Coop: Furnishing and Housekeeping.....	123
<i>Part III: Caring for Your Flock:</i> <i>General Management</i>	139
Chapter 8: Feeding Your Flock.....	141
Chapter 9: Controlling Pests and Predators.....	165
Chapter 10: Keeping Your Flock Happy and Healthy	181
Chapter 11: Handling Health Problems.....	199
<i>Part IV: Breeding: From Chicken</i> <i>to Egg and Back Again</i>	221
Chapter 12: Mating Your Chickens.....	223
Chapter 13: Incubating Eggs and Hatching Chicks.....	243
Chapter 14: Raising Chicks	273
<i>Part V: Special Management Considerations</i>	297
Chapter 15: Managing Layers and Collecting Eggs.....	299
Chapter 16: Raising and Butchering Meat Birds.....	323
<i>Part VI: The Part of Tens</i>	357
Chapter 17: More than Ten Tips for Keeping Healthy, Stress-Free Chickens	359
Chapter 18: More than Ten Misconceptions about Chickens, Eggs, and So On....	365
<i>Index</i>	371

Table of Contents

***Introduction* 1**

About This Book	1
Conventions Used in This Book.....	2
What You're Not to Read.....	2
Foolish Assumptions.....	2
How This Book Is Organized	3
Part I: Choosing Chickens	3
Part II: Housing Your Flock.....	3
Part III: Caring For Your Flock: General Management	4
Part IV: Breeding: From Chicken to Egg and Back Again	4
Part V: Special Management Considerations	4
Part V: The Part of Tens.....	4
Icons Used in This Book	5
Where to Go from Here.....	5

***Part 1: Choosing Chickens* 7**

Chapter 1: The Joy of Chickens 9

First Things First: Dealing with the Legal Issues	9
Knowing what info you need	10
Finding the info	11
Confronting restrictions.....	12
Assessing Your Capabilities: Basic Chicken Care and Requirements	13
Time.....	13
Space	14
Money.....	14
Focusing Your Intentions: Specific Considerations	15
Want eggs (and, therefore, layers)?	15
Thinking about home-grown meat?	16
Enticed by fun and games or 4-H and FFA?	18
Considering Neighbors	18

Chapter 2: Basic Chicken Biology and Behavior 21

Familiarizing Yourself with a Chicken's Physique.....	21
Labeling a Chicken's Many Parts	23
Checking out the differences.....	23
Honing in on the head and neck	24
Checking out the bulk of the body	27



Looking at the legs and feet.....	27
Checking out chicken skin.....	27
Finding out about feathers.....	28
A Picture of Health.....	30
On Chicken Behavior.....	31
Processing information.....	32
Communication.....	32
Table manners.....	33
Sleeping.....	34
Socializing.....	35
Romance.....	36
The celibate hen — living without a rooster.....	36
New life.....	37
Bath time.....	38

Chapter 3: A Chicken Isn't Just a Chicken: Your Guide to Breeds . . . 39

What You Need to Know: A Brief Synopsis.....	40
Common breed terminology.....	40
How breeds are categorized.....	42
For Those Who Want It All: Dual-Purpose Breeds.....	43
For Egg-Lovers: Laying Breeds.....	44
White-egg layers.....	44
Brown-egg layers.....	46
Colored-egg layers.....	48
Best Breeds for the Table.....	49
Show Breeds.....	51
Perfect for Pets: Bantam Breeds.....	52
Heritage and Rare Breeds.....	53

Chapter 4: Buying Chickens 55

Planning Your Flock.....	55
Deciding what you'll start with: Eggs, chicks, or adults.....	56
Choosing the gender.....	58
Getting the right number of chickens.....	59
Counting the Costs.....	60
Starting with Chicks.....	61
Where to get chicks.....	61
When to buy chicks.....	65
What to look for.....	65
Handling chicks.....	68
Starting with Adults.....	69
Where to buy adult chickens.....	69
What to look for.....	69
Transporting your birds safely.....	71

***Part II: Housing Your Flock*..... 73**
Chapter 5: Choosing Your Housing Type75

What a Chicken Needs in a Home.....	76
Shelter from wind and rain.....	76
Protection from predators.....	76
Temperature control.....	77
Enough space to move about normally.....	78
Sufficient lighting.....	79
Fresh air.....	80
Clean surroundings.....	81
Surveying Your Housing Options.....	81
Raising chickens in cages.....	82
Keeping birds cage-free, but indoors-only.....	84
Pairing a shelter with a run.....	84
Offering shelter with free-range access.....	85
Looking at small, all-in-one units.....	87
Considering hoop or A-frame housing.....	88
Mobile housing methods: Pastured poultry.....	89
The duplex.....	92
The chicken garden.....	93
Choosing a Type of Housing.....	94

Chapter 6: Designing and Constructing a Coop 99

To Repurpose, to Build, or to Buy? That Is the Question.....	100
Checking on housing restrictions.....	100
Making do with what you've got.....	101
Building from scratch.....	101
Buying pre-fab-ulous coops.....	103
Choosing the Right Location.....	105
Form and Function: The Basic Coop Blueprint.....	107
Coop size and shape: Giving your birds some breathing room.....	107
Ventilation: Allowing fresh air to flow.....	108
Roost and relaxation.....	108
Feathering their nests.....	111
Miscellany: What more could you possibly want?.....	114
Wiring, Fixtures, and Other Important Amenities.....	115
Providing the hookups (electrical, that is).....	115
Lighting up.....	115
Baby, it's cooold outside!.....	117
Keeping it cool.....	117

Being Mindful of Materials.....	118
Getting to the bottom of flooring.....	119
Constructing the frame.....	119
Wrapping your head around fencing.....	120
Supporting fencing with posts.....	121

Chapter 7: Coop, Sweet Coop: Furnishing and Housekeeping. . . . 123

Bedding Down.....	123
Making Nests Comfy and Cozy.....	125
Setting the Table and Crafting a “Pantry”.....	126
Feeding containers.....	126
Watering containers.....	128
Storing feed properly.....	130
Cleaning House.....	132
Gathering cleaning supplies.....	132
Seeing what you need to do and when.....	134
Disposing of manure and old bedding.....	136

Part III: Caring for Your Flock: General Management..... 139

Chapter 8: Feeding Your Flock. 141

Feeding Basics.....	141
Understanding why you need to manage your birds’ diet.....	142
Knowing what nutrients chickens need.....	144
Comparing your feed options.....	147
Things to avoid feeding chickens at all costs.....	153
Choosing the Right Commercial Feed.....	154
Demystifying commercial rations.....	155
Selecting a form of feed.....	157
Double-checking the label.....	158
Supplementing Diets with Grit.....	159
Deciding When to Put Out Feed.....	160
Determining How Much to Feed.....	161
Keeping the Diet Interesting by Offering Treats.....	161
Hydrating Your Hens (and Roosters).....	163

Chapter 9: Controlling Pests and Predators 165

Keeping Pests from Infesting the Coop.....	165
Preventing pests.....	165
Identifying and eliminating common culprits.....	166

Fending Off Predators	170
Providing safe surroundings	171
Recognizing common chicken predators	172
Figuring out who's causing trouble	177
Catching the troublemaker	179

Chapter 10: Keeping Your Flock Happy and Healthy 181

Taking Basic Precautions to Protect Your Flock	181
Dealing with heat, cold, and dampness	182
Safely handling your birds	183
Keeping your chickens from eating poisons	184
Catching Chickens	185
Carrying and Holding Chicks and Chickens	187
Preventing Illness and Disease	188
Giving vaccinations	188
Putting up barriers against parasites	190
Quarantining new birds or those that have been off your property	190
Diffusing Stress	191
Managing the molt	191
Introducing new birds carefully	192
Discouraging bullying behaviors	193
Employing Optional Grooming Procedures	194
Marking birds for easy identification	195
Trimming long, curled nails	195
Trimming wings and other feathers	196
Finding a Good Vet, Just in Case	197

Chapter 11: Handling Health Problems 199

Treating Injuries	200
Giving your bird the once-over	200
Keeping an injured bird safe	200
Skin injuries, cuts, and puncture wounds	201
Foot sores (also known as bumblefoot)	202
Head injuries	203
Broken legs or wings	204
Frostbite	205
Egg binding	205
Getting Rid of Parasites	206
Internal parasites	207
External parasites	209
Recognizing and Dealing with Disease	212
Checking for signs of disease	212
Making decisions about treatment	216
Administering Medications	217
Encountering Death	218

***Part IV: Breeding: From Chicken to Egg and Back Again* 221**

Chapter 12: Mating Your Chickens223

Rooster or Hen?	223
Sexing young chickens	224
Sexing mature chickens	226
Reviewing the Reproductive System.....	227
Roosters	228
Hens	228
How an egg is formed	230
Sperm Meets Egg: Fertilization	230
Reproductive Behavior	231
Courtship and mating.....	231
Nesting and brooding behavior	232
Mating Methods.....	233
Flock mating	233
Pair and trio mating.....	234
Artificial insemination	235
Selecting Birds for Breeding.....	235
Choosing the right combinations	235
Producing purebred chickens	236
Producing hybrids	238
Producing sex/color-linked colors.....	239
Getting Birds Ready to Breed.....	240
Feeding future parents	240
Lighting and temperature	241
Feather trimming	242

Chapter 13: Incubating Eggs and Hatching Chicks 243

Making More Chicks: Incubation Basics	244
Choosing Your Hatching Method	245
Looking at the two methods: Hens versus incubators	245
Determining which method is best for you	246
Letting Mother Nature Do It: The Hen Method of Incubation.....	248
Understanding why some hens brood, and others don't.....	248
Encouraging your hens to brood	249
Adding eggs to the nest.....	250
Giving a sitting hen what she needs	251
Caring for a hen and chicks	252
Going Artificial: The Incubator Method	255
Choosing an incubator	255
Accessorizing your incubator	257
Setting up and caring for your incubator	258
Finding and storing fertile eggs.....	260
Caring for eggs in the incubator	263

Looking Inside the Egg..... 264
 Egg ultrasound: Candling an egg..... 265
 Knowing what to look for: Stages of embryonic growth..... 266
 Hello, World! Hatching Your Eggs 268
 Playing doctor: Helping a chick hatch 269
 The bad hatch: When things go wrong..... 270

Chapter 14: Raising Chicks..... 273

The Basics of Brooders..... 274
 When chicks need a brooder..... 274
 Brooder size and shape 275
 Getting the temperature just right..... 275
 Gauging temperature by your chicks’ behavior 276
 Lighting the brooder 277
 Brooder bedding..... 278
 Buying a commercial brooder..... 278
 Making Your Own Brooder..... 279
 Building the body of the brooder 280
 Heating the brooder 281
 Putting safety first..... 283
 Helping a Hen Provide Warmth and Protection 284
 Feeding and Watering Chicks..... 285
 Choosing a starter feed..... 285
 Considering medicated feed..... 286
 The feeding process 286
 You can lead a chick to water 287
 Raising Chicks in Your Brooder..... 288
 What to do the first hour 288
 The first few days..... 289
 Trimming beaks 291
 Preventing disease..... 291
 Watching the Stages of Growth 292
 One month: Tween-agers 292
 Six weeks to maturity: Teenagers 293
 I’m a big chicken now: Young adulthood..... 293
 Chicks and Children 294
 Human health issues 295
 Teaching proper handling 295

Part V: Special Management Considerations..... 297

Chapter 15: Managing Layers and Collecting Eggs 299

Knowing What to Expect from Your Hens..... 299
 The layer’s life cycle..... 300
 Internal factors that influence laying 301
 External factors that influence laying 301

Managing Your Hens' Laying Years.....	302
Getting young hens ready to lay	302
Helping your pullets avoid stress	303
Providing encouragement.....	303
Using lighting to encourage laying to start.....	304
Encouraging Egg Production After It Has Begun	304
Providing supplemental lighting to keep hens laying	304
Keeping up a routine and minimizing stress	305
Retiring old birds when the laying days are done.....	306
Collecting, Cleaning, and Storing Eggs.....	306
Getting your eggs in one basket.....	307
Cleaning your cache	308
Assessing Egg Quality	309
Parts of an egg.....	309
Looking at the outside.....	310
Looking at the inside	312
Storing and Handling Eggs.....	314
How to store eggs	314
Eggs to discard.....	315
What to do with excess eggs	315
Dealing with Production Problems and Bad Habits.....	316
Addressing the failure to lay	316
Bringing order to hens that lay all over the place.....	318
Getting a broody hen to go back to laying	320
Handling hens that break and eat eggs.....	321

Chapter 16: Raising and Butchering Meat Birds323

Raising Meat Chickens	323
Looking at the three main approaches to raising meat birds.....	324
Choosing the right chickens.....	325
Choosing the right time of year to raise chickens.....	327
Deciding how many chickens to raise.....	328
Caring for meat chickens	329
Planning for D-Day.....	333
Knowing when your birds are ready	334
Deciding whether to hire a butcher or do it yourself	334
Hiring Out the Butchering	337
Finding a butcher	337
Knowing what to expect.....	338
Preparing to Do the Deed Yourself	339
Choosing the location	340
Gathering equipment and supplies	340
Following the Play-by-Play of Butchering Day	344
Beginning with the kill.....	344
Removing the feathers	347
Cleaning and inspecting the bird.....	348

Packaging Home-Butchered Poultry 352
 Rinsing and checking the chicken 353
 Cutting the chicken in a usable fashion 353
 Selecting suitable packaging products 354
 Packing it in 354
 Avoiding freezer overload 355
 Taking advantage of some freezer tips 355

Part VI: The Part of Tens..... 357

Chapter 17: More than Ten Tips for Keeping Healthy, Stress-Free Chickens 359

Choose the Right Breed for Your Needs..... 359
 Set Up Suitable Housing..... 360
 Supplement Lighting when Needed..... 360
 Control Pests..... 361
 Protect Against Predators 361
 Control Parasites 362
 Vaccinate 363
 Feed a Well-Balanced Diet 363
 Make Sure You Provide Enough Clean Water 364
 Beware Disease-Transmitting Dangers 364
 Use Quarantines Whenever Necessary..... 364

Chapter 18: More than Ten Misconceptions about Chickens, Eggs, and So On 365

Bird Flu Is a Risk to Reckon With 365
 You Can't Raise Chickens if You Live in the City 366
 Roosters Crow Only in the Morning..... 367
 You Need a Rooster to Get Eggs..... 367
 Keeping Chickens Penned Is Inhumane..... 367
 Chickens Are Vegetarians..... 368
 Big, Brown, Organic Eggs Are Best in Taste and Quality 368
 Fertilized and Unfertilized Eggs Are Easily Distinguishable 369
 Egg-Carton Advertising Is the Absolute Truth..... 369
 Chickens Are Good for Your Garden..... 370
 Chickens Are Dumb and Cowardly..... 370

Index..... 371

