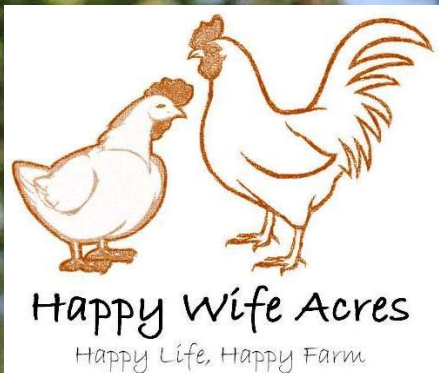


# Beginner's Guide to Raising Chickens



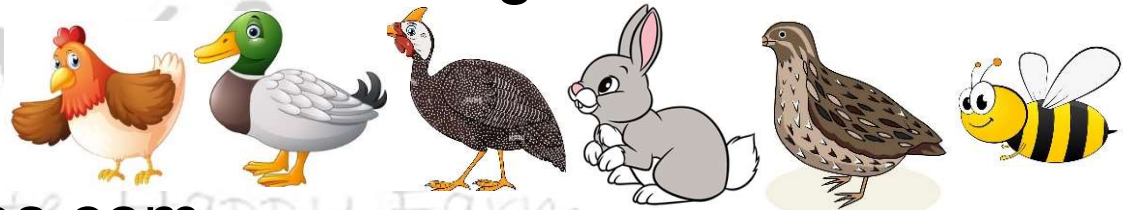
in cooperation with

**Rural King**  
America's Farm and Home Store

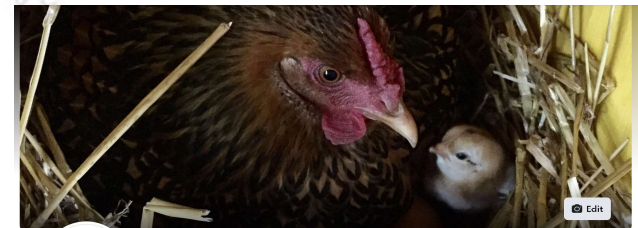


# About Your Instructors

- John and Andrea Hancock
- Raising chickens since 2016
- Operate Happy Wife Acres
  - Educational Homestead
  - Teaching others to be more sustainable
- Farm animals are chickens, ducks, guineas, rabbits, quail, and bees



- [www.happywifeacres.com](http://www.happywifeacres.com)
- [www.facebook.com/happywifeacres](https://www.facebook.com/happywifeacres)
- [www.youtube.com/c/happywifeacres](https://www.youtube.com/c/happywifeacres)



Happy Wife Acres

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# Questions to Ask BEFORE Buying

1. Why do I want chickens?
2. Can I have chickens where I live?
3. How many chickens can I have?
4. Can I have roosters where I live?
5. Is my chick brooder (housing) ready before I buy?
6. What do chicks and chickens eat?
7. What breeds should I buy?
8. What will I do if a chick grows up to be a rooster?
9. Will I have a coop ready when they grow up?
10. What will I do when my hens stop laying?

# Q1. Why Do I Want Chickens?

- Reasons:

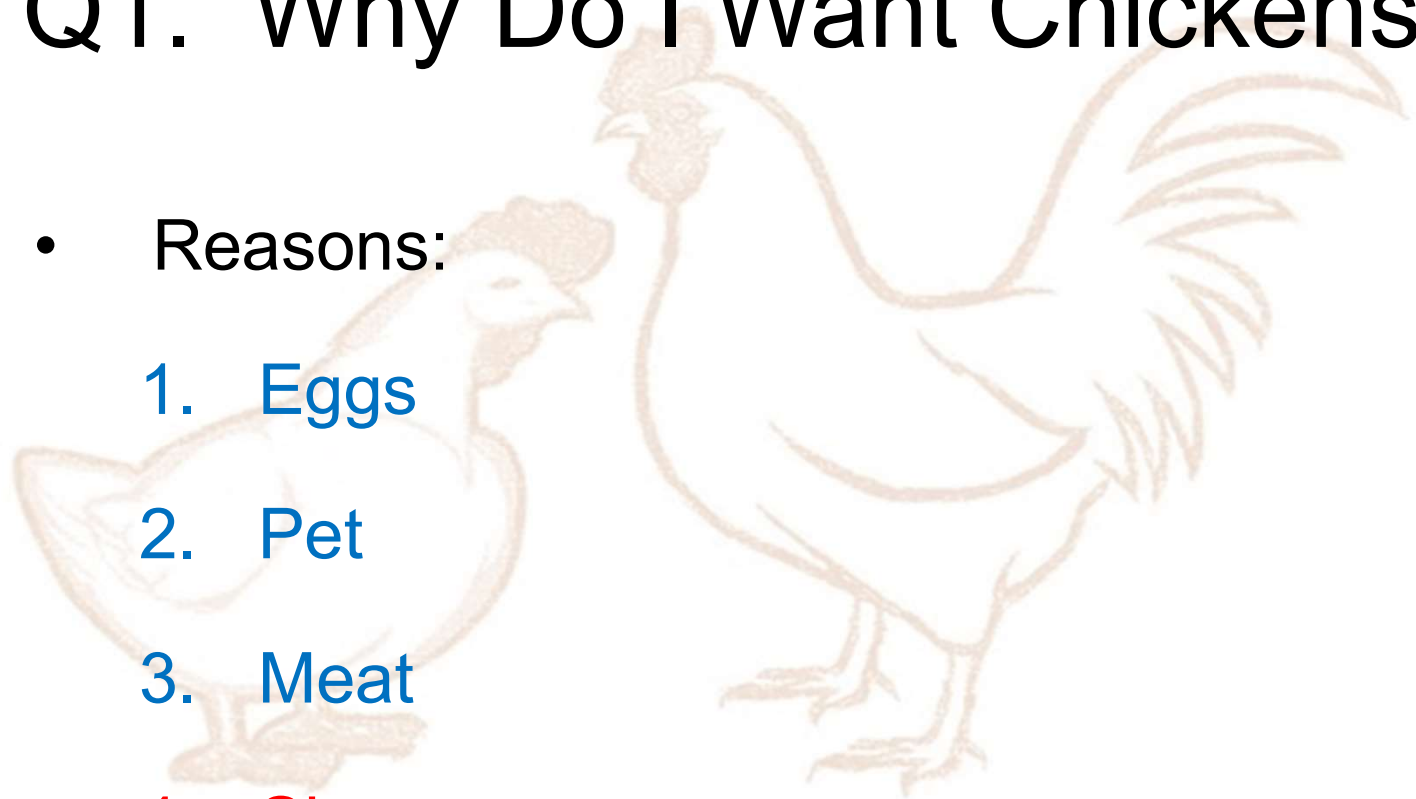
1. Eggs

2. Pet

3. Meat

4. Show

- Benefits you might not know about...



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# The Incredible Chicken Farmhand



## Food Source

One chicken produces 200-350 eggs per year

## Tilling

A chicken scratches and tills all day, preparing 50 sq. ft. per month



## Food Waste Disposal

One chicken can eat a pound of food scraps each day

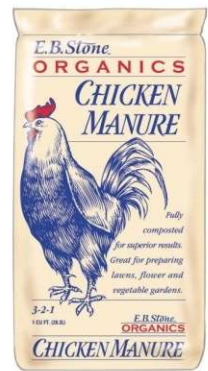


## Pest Control

Chickens love to eat bugs, grubs, and worms

## Fertilizer

One chicken produces 1/4 pound of manure each day, used for lawns, gardens and flower beds



## Weed Control

Chickens eat weeds, grass, and clover



## Composting

Chickens help turn and aerate compost piles; manure is essential to composting



Q2. Can I Have Chickens Where I Live?

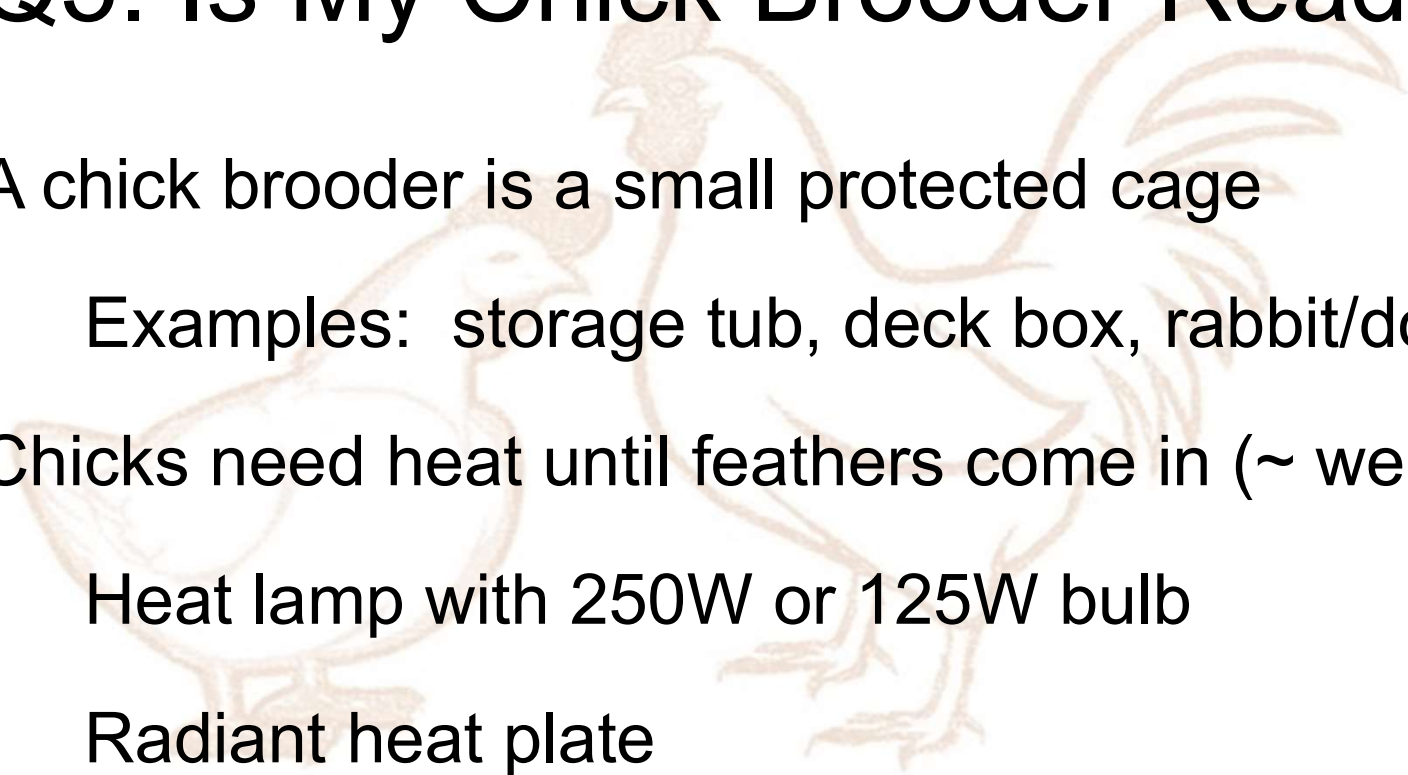
Q3. How Many Can I Have?

Q4. Can I Have Roosters?

1. Check with your local government zoning office
  - a. Most townships & unincorporated areas = YES
  - b. Xenia & Dayton = YES
  - c. Huber Heights, Fairborn, Beavercreek = NO
  
2. Even if YES, understand restrictions, like:
  - a. Maximum allowed
  - b. No roosters
  - c. Minimum property size
  - d. Coop distance from residence or neighbors

# Q5. Is My Chick Brooder Ready?

- A chick brooder is a small protected cage
  - Examples: storage tub, deck box, rabbit/dog cage
- Chicks need heat until feathers come in (~ week 3)
  - Heat lamp with 250W or 125W bulb
  - Radiant heat plate
- Waterer
- Feeder
- Bedding (such as medium pine flake)



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# Chick Brooders



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## Q6. What Do Chicks & Chickens Eat?

- Chicks: Medicated Chick Starter
  - 0 to 20 weeks (but at least 6 weeks)
  - Medication is Amprolium, a thiamin blocker
  - Thiamin allows coccidia parasite reproduction. Coccidia are parasites that live in the intestine and block nutrition absorption (called Coccidiosis)
  - Chickens develop immunity as they mature
- Adults: Layer Crumble or Layer Pellets (16% protein). Adult chickens eat about 1/3 pound food per day
- Grit are small rocks or ground oyster shell; necessary for digestion if chickens don't free range

## Q6. What Do Chicks & Chickens Eat?

- Chickens are omnivores and eat nearly everything you do!
  - Bread, fruit, vegetables, meat (including chicken!)
  - Plus bugs, grass, microbes, mice, lizards, butterflies, grasshoppers, feathers
  - For snacks, feed scratch grains, cracked corn, whole corn, meal worms, sunflower seeds
  - Collect & feed kitchen scraps and leftovers
  - Avoid giving citrus, raw onions, raw potatoes
  - They know what they shouldn't eat, so don't worry!
- Always provide a source of clean water
- Chickens are pigs with feathers!

# Q7. What Breeds Should I Buy?

It depends on YOU and why you want chickens

## 1. Egg production

- White Eggs – White & Brown Leghorns
- Brown Eggs – Rhode Island Red, ISA Brown
- Blue/Green Eggs – Ameraucana, Easter Egger

## 2. Pet

- Buff Orpingtons, Rhode Island Reds, ISA Browns & Bielefelders are friendly and good with children
- Bantams are small and many make good pets
- Leghorns are flighty (avoid as pets)

## 3. Meat

- Cornish Cross or Red Rangers
- Ready for processing in 2-3 months



# Q7. What Breeds Should I Buy?

- Cold/heat hardy: Most chickens sold at Rural King can survive temperatures to -20F.
  - Heavy breeds include Australorp, Barred Rock, Rhode Island Red, Orpingtons
  - DO NOT provide space heaters in coops – EVER!
  - In hot weather, add a fan to cool
- “Beautiful” chickens generally produce less and smaller eggs.
- Dual Purpose Breeds (eggs and meat): Rhode Island Reds, Orpingtons, Bielefelders
- If raising for meat, have a plan BEFORE you buy
  - Only 2 processors in our area with long wait times



Rhode Island Red



White Leghorn



Speckled Sussex



Buff Orpington



Black Australorp



ISA Brown



Ameraucana



Silver Laced Wyandotte

# Q7. What Breeds Should I Buy?

- Some TERMS to know when buying:
  - PULLET is a young female; grows into a hen
  - COCKEREL is a young male; grows into a rooster
  - STRAIGHT RUN means chicks are unsexed; expect half to be cockerels
  - BANTAM is a small breed; grows to be 1/3 to 1/2 of regular size chicken with small eggs
  - MEAT CHICKEN is usually Cornish Cross; it grows fast and must be processed to avoid suffering



# Don't Use Heat Lamps in the Coop!



# Q8. What If I Get an Unwanted Rooster?

- Roosters are a wonderful flock addition IF you are allowed to have one
  - Protection when free ranging
  - Reproduction of the flock
- If not allowed, get rid of it!
  - Process and eat
  - Rehome
  - Give to someone who will process and eat (like Happy Wife Acres)
- NEVER tolerate aggressive roosters
  - Aggression is hormone based, not training
  - Dispatch

## Q8. What If I Get an Unwanted Rooster?

- Don't blame Rural King for unwanted roosters
  - Chicks are ordered from independent hatcheries
  - Professional chick sexers are correct about 90% of the time
- To be GUARANTEED an all-hen flock, buy sex-linked breeds (can tell males from females at hatch by color)
  - ISA Brown (incl Red Star, Golden Comet, Cinnamon Queen)
  - Red Sex Link
  - Black Sex Link
  - Bielefelders
  - Legbars



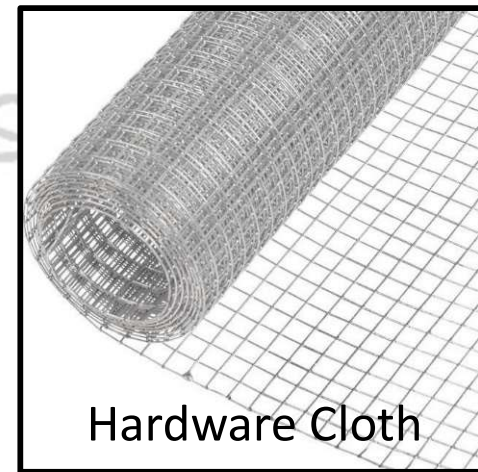
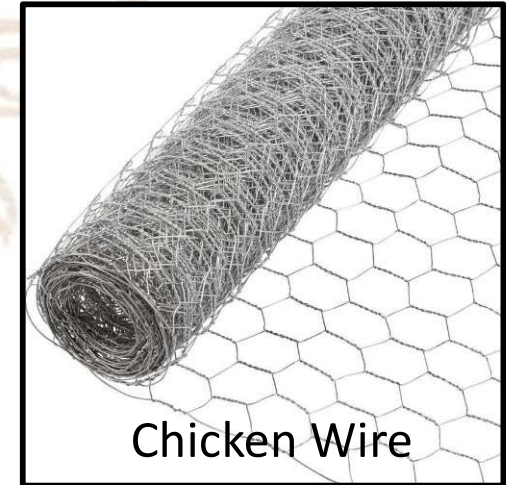
# Q9. Will I Have a Coop Ready?

- Pre-made coops can cost \$300-\$1000 or more
- Building a coop requires skill, tools, material, and time
- Many modify a barn or shed
- Chickens need protection from cold wind, rain, and predators
- If you are unsure if you can afford a coop, don't get chicks until you ARE sure!

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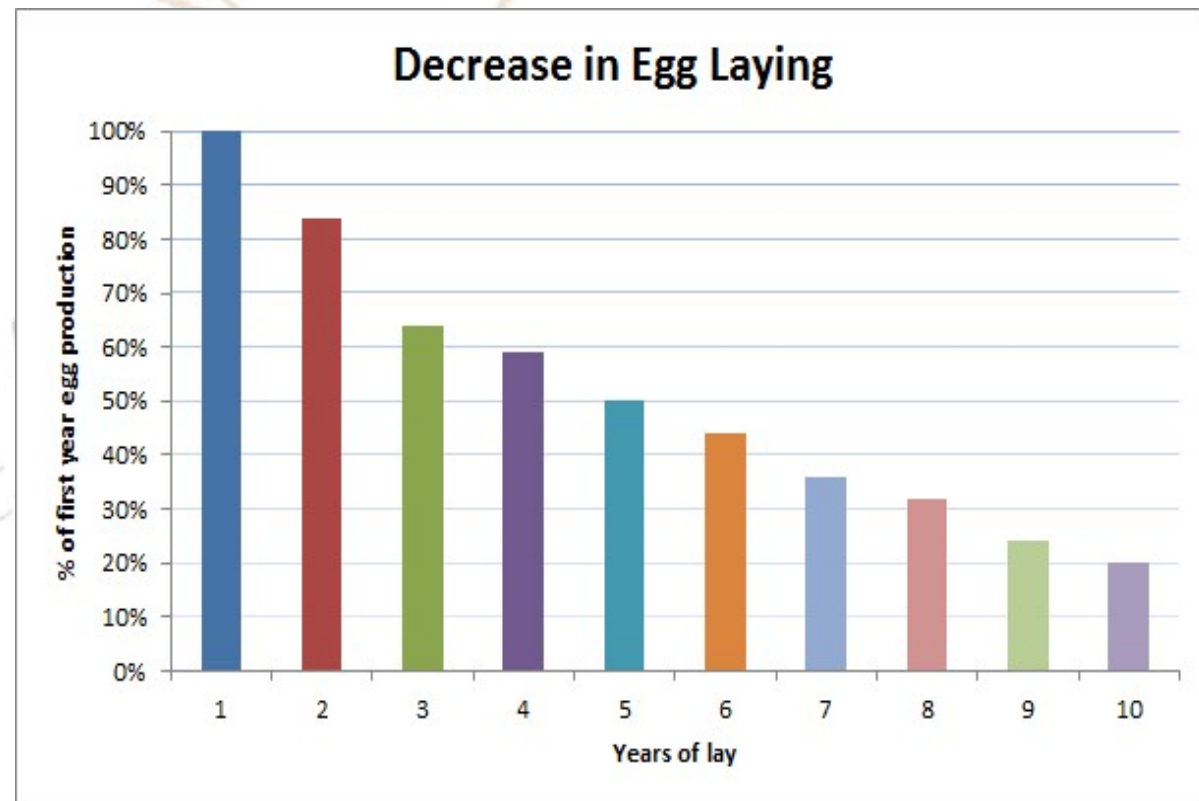
# Q9. Will I Have a Coop Ready?

- Space
  - 2 sq ft per bird in coop
  - 8 sq ft per bird in enclosed run
  - Build for growth! (Chicken Math)
- Security
  - Do NOT use chicken wire (it only keeps chickens in)
  - No gaps more than 1 inch
  - Bury hardware cloth to prevent digging
  - Durability over time (don't go cheap!)
- Convenience
  - Ability to service food, water, & eggs
  - Ability to clean out



# Q10. What Will I Do When My Hens Stop Laying?

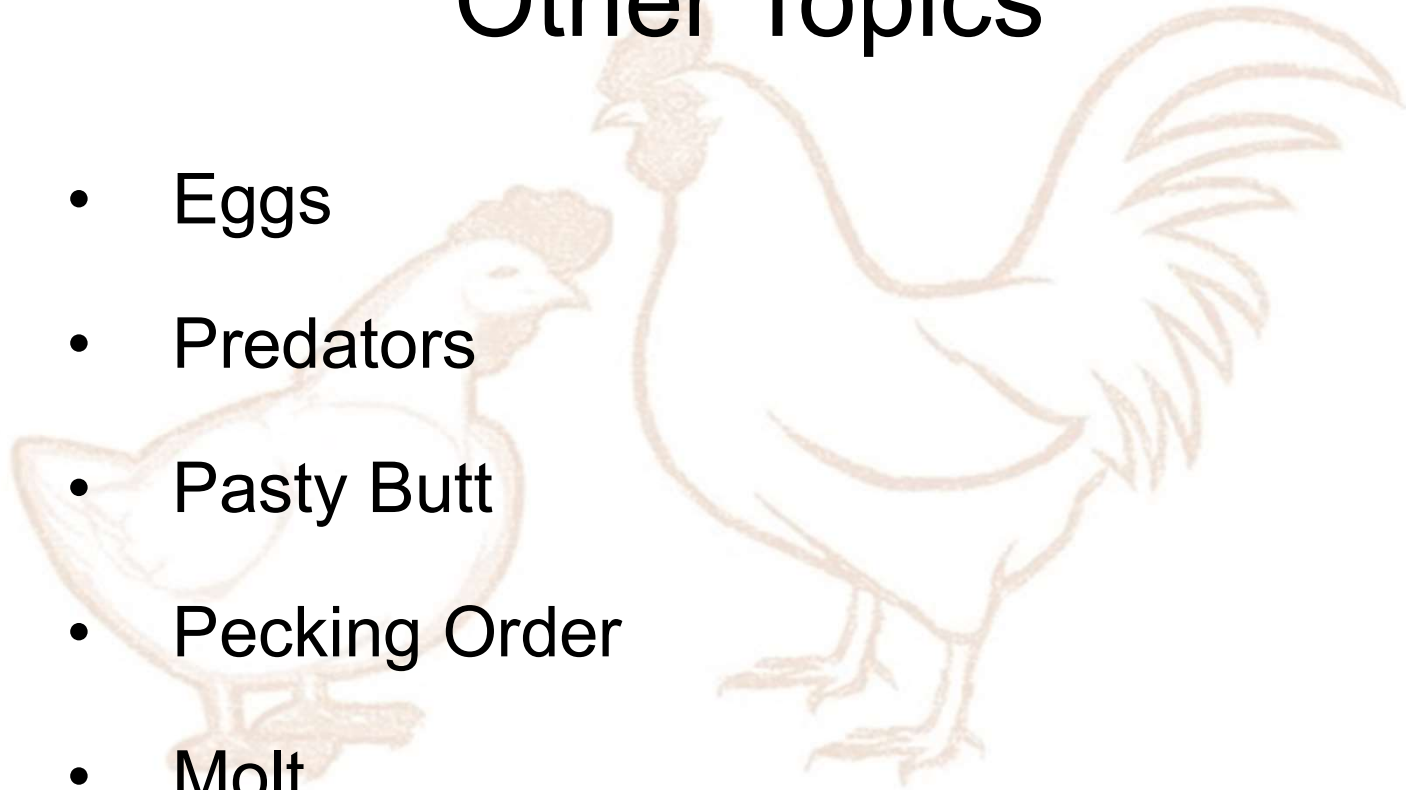
- Chances are:
  1. You'll outlive your chickens
  2. Your chickens will live longer than they lay
  3. You'll have tough choices to make within 5 years
- About 20% less eggs each year, but they eat the same amount!
- Choices:
  - Raise as a pet
  - Process





# Other Topics

- Eggs
- Predators
- Pasty Butt
- Pecking Order
- Molt
- Broody Hens



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# Eggs

- Most chickens start laying eggs at 20 weeks
  - Bantams and specialty breeds can take 8 months
  - Watch for bright red combs, squatting, & egg song
- Eggs come in white, brown, dark brown, pink, blue, and green
- Hens will lay up to 300 eggs per year (leghorns), and as few as 100 (bantams)
- Most eggs in spring; least eggs in winter
- Most hens lay before noon
- Hens DON'T need a rooster to lay eggs!

# Eggs

- The egg has a natural protective layer call the bloom or cuticle
  - The bloom protects the porous shell from bacteria
  - The bloom is destroyed when eggs are washed
  - Unwashed eggs can be left unrefrigerated for up to one month
- All eggs from the same environment are the same on the inside, no matter the color of the shell
- Cold weather and daylight impact egg production
- Egg production drops each year
- But even old hens lay in spring



# The Egg Song



# Predators

- Every predator loves chicken!
- Most ground predators come out at night
- Lock your chickens up tight at night
- If you trap predators, be prepared to dispatch
  - Relocation is illegal in Ohio and inhumane
- Killing a bird of prey (hawk, eagle) is a federal misdemeanor

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# Predators

	<u>Day</u>	<u>Night</u>
<u>Air</u>	Hawks Eagles	Owls
<u>Ground</u>	Neighbor Dogs Stray Dogs Fox	Raccoons Opossums Skunks Coyotes Minks/Weasels/Fishers

Note: Crows and Turkey Buzzards are NOT chicken predators. Crows hate hawks!



# Pasty Butt

- Pasty Butt: poop gets stuck on a chick's butt
- Usually occurs within the first 2 weeks of life
- If not cleared, it can prevent pooping and cause death
- Check your chick's butt daily for 2 weeks
- Pull off or soak chick in warm water

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# Pecking Order

- There are no equals in the chicken community
- Chickens will fight to secure their place in the order
- The order will occasionally change
  - Chickens added / removed
  - Illness
  - Age
- When introducing new chickens to the flock, let the process occur
  - Will sort out in 2-3 days
  - Watch for injuries; give first aid if necessary
  - Blood is common; death is rare

# Molt



- Molt is when chickens shed old worn feathers and regrow new ones; hens and roosters molt
- First molt usually occurs during a chicken's second fall
- Most hens stop laying during molt
  - Feathers are protein and the body gives priority over eggs
- After each molt, a hen's egg production reduces by about 20%
  - During years 4-5, egg production is at 50%
- Commercial egg producers replace their flock before first molt, when chicken is 18 months old



# Molt



- Chickens can be sensitive to touch during molt
- Keep them comfortable; give extra treats & protein snacks

# Broody Hens

- Broody hens sit on eggs to hatch them
- You can't make a hen become broody
- You can “break” a broody hen by making them uncomfortable
  - Put in dog cage with no bedding
- Broodiness has been bred out of many chickens
  - About 1 in 10 hens still become broody
- A broody hen will
  - Sit all day in the nest box on eggs
  - Be cranky and irritable when touched

# Broody Hens

- If accommodating a broody hen:
  - Move to a safe place, away from other hens
  - Give fertile eggs (mark them)
  - If no rooster, buy eggs from a farm with roosters
  - Or replace eggs (or golf balls) with chicks at hatch date
- Incubation takes 21 days
- Broody hens tend to be broody again

HAPPY WIFE ACRES

HAPPY LIFE, HAPPY FARM

# Wrap-Up

- Chickens can be your best farmhand
- Beneficial to the homestead
- Can be easy to keep: food, water, safety
- Please follow our social media:
  -  [Happywifeacres.com](http://Happywifeacres.com)
  -  [Youtube.com/c/happywifeacres](https://www.youtube.com/c/happywifeacres)  
  -  [Facebook.com/happywifeacres](https://www.facebook.com/happywifeacres)
- We are here to help you get answers
  - FB Messenger: <https://m.me/HAPPYWIFEACRES>
  - [Andrea@happywifeacres.com](mailto:Andrea@happywifeacres.com)
  - Call/Text 937-361-5798





**MY SPIRIT ANIMAL IS AN EAGLE**