

Backyard Chickens



Livermore rules and regulations

- In Livermore you need to apply for an animal fancier's permit.
 - <http://www.cityoflivermore.net/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=4195>
- Animals need to be kept in clean and healthy conditions, with appropriate bedding, perches and protection from the weather
- Coops need to be located five feet from residential lot lines
- Roosters are not allowed
- Not to exceed 10 birds per lot
- Enclosure Specifications: Wood and wire mesh construction
- Enclosure Size: Minimum of two square feet per bantam bird, minimum of three square feet per standard breed

Coop/shelter options











Chicken Shelter Needs

- Shelter of at least 3 ft² per bird
- Space or access to space for chickens to move around
 - At least 10 ft² per bird
- Chicken door that can be opened and closed daily
- Human door
- Roosts
 - At least 12" apart
- Feeder
- Waterer
- Nesting boxes
 - At least 12"x12", Quiet and dark
- A system to manage manure
- Free from drafts in winter
- Keeps out predators
- Cool in summer
 - Shade, adequate ventilation

Chicken Shelter Niceties

- Food and tool storage
- Light controlled chicken door
- Electricity/light bulb
- Water spigot
- Chickens naturally want to fly up to roost at night , so shelters or roosts should be raised
- A bathtub
- A dust bath

Gardening with Chickens

- Chickens will scratch the ground bare. To deal with this, consider:
 - Locating chickens near the garden so that you can easily throw them trimmings and scraps
 - Mobile coop/chicken tractor so that you can rotate your chickens with crops
 - Letting the chickens out for a short time in the evening, so they don't have all day to damage the garden
 - Divide the garden area in two with the chicken house in the middle. Garden on one side and run the chickens on the other. Rotate these annually
- Protect plants from free ranging birds by placing a heavy stones around the root zone

Confined vs. Free Range

- Confined chickens are fenced into a run whereas free range chickens may wander around at will during daylight hours
- Confined chickens should have 10 ft² per hen of yard space.

“A confinement house with good ventilation and properly managed litter may be more healthful than a yard covered in mud and manure” – Gail Damerow

Chicken breeds

Australorp



Amaraucana or Easter Egger

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Photos from Welp Hatchery

<http://www.welp hatchery.com/index.php?p=home>

Chicken Breeds

- Mediterranean breeds such as Leghorns tend to be flighty (they don't like people)
- In my experience heavier breeds tend to have more mellow personalities

How to get chicks

- Feed stores carry chicks in the Spring
 - Hatcheries ship Spring, Summer and early Fall
 - Belt, Privett , Welp, McMurray, JM
- Most Hatcheries ship boxes of 25 chicks
- You can get pullets or a straight run (mixed sexes)
- Make sure your chicks are vaccinated for Marek's disease
- Birds from backyard breeders are more likely to carry parasites
- You can also incubate fertilized eggs, but you will need to vaccinate them yourself

Chick care

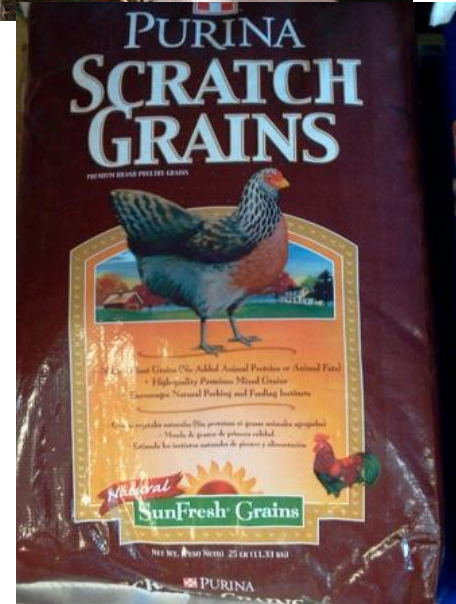
- Brooder setup:
 - Rubbermaid tub or cardboard box or tank
 - Heat lamp
 - Newspaper
 - Pine shavings for after the first five days
 - Water dish or dispenser
 - Feeder
 - Chick starter food
- I move fully feathered chicks into a dog kennel before moving them into the coop

What to do about roosters

- Sexing at the hatchery is not guaranteed, so be prepared to deal with a rooster
- It is relatively easy to eat them or find someone who will eat them.
 - Food pantry
 - Craigslist



Food and Water



Feeding and watering

- I feed
 - Layeena pellets
 - Scratch grains
 - Oyster Shell
 - Table scraps
 - Garden greens



Table Scraps

- Avoid:
 - Raw potato peels
 - Avocado seeds
 - Chicken
 - Raw eggs
 - Anything spoiled
- Don't overdo any one food
- If it is junk food for humans, it is junk food for chickens
- Strong flavored foods can give eggs an off flavor

Water



Water

- Chickens need access to clean drinking water during the day
- I like cup drinkers
- Bell waterers are also common
- A mortar mixing tub of clean water makes a nice cool bath for chickens when the weather is hot



Cannibalism

- Cannibalism is when chickens peck each other's bodies
- It can be caused by stress and/or boredom
 - Make sure that chickens have adequate space to roam and roost
 - Add things to their environment that encourage foraging
 - Make sure that there is adequate fiber and protein in their diet
 - Keep them cool in the summer

Predators

- **Rats**
- **Racoons**
- **Hawks**
- **Owls**
- **Possums**
- **Dogs**

“The way to deal with predators is to eliminate the predator’s point of entry or eliminate the predator”
- Gail Damerow

Build a Sturdy Coop!



Weather

- Heat is more stressful than cold
 - Cool bath
 - Shade
 - Hose down a shady area for evaporative cooling
 - Run a fan

Dealing With Manure

- Manure in the coop should not crust or stink, if it does, add bedding such as straw or hay
 - I clean when the litter reaches 12"-15" deep.
- When it comes time to clean the coop
 - Spray it with water to keep dust down
 - Wear a mask
 - Shovel it all out and build a compost pile
- The coop should be thoroughly cleaned at least once per year and before getting a new batch of chickens
 - Remove all dust, manure and feather dander
 - Bleach all feeders and waterers with a 10:1 bleach solution

Coop Cleaning tools



Coop Cleaning tools

- Mask
- Wheelbarrow
- Offset paint scraper
- Snow scoop
- Manure or ensilage fork

Compost



Health

- **The best way to keep your flock healthy is to avoid stress by providing food, water, and shelter that is ample and clean**
- **Keep your chickens away from other chickens and chicken people**
 - **Get a pair of coop boots**
- **Acquire only healthy stock**
- **Buy Merek's disease vaccinated chicks or vaccinate day old chicks**
- **Keep wild birds away, especially waterfowl**
- **Control insects and rodents**

Parasites

- Worms: If you see evidence of worms (diahorea, worms, talk your vet or the feed store about a deworming program)
- Mites and fleas can be controlled with cleaning and a diatomaceous earth and sand dust bath

Parasites

- Northern Fowl Mites
- Sticktight fleas



Diseases: Necropsies and Reporting

- If your chickens suddenly become ill, California Animal Health & Food Safety Laboratory System wants to know
- You can send chickens in for a necropsy to diagnose what went wrong
- You could prevent an outbreak of bird flu
- <http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/cahfs/about/locations/davis.cfm>

Eggs

- **Color**
 - The color of the shell is determined by the breed of the chicken
 - The color of the yolk is determined by the chicken's diet
 - Carotenoids from greens make deep orange yolks



Egg production

- Egg production is highest in Spring and lowest in Fall
- Most hens start laying at 18-22 weeks old
- Peak production is at 30 weeks when prolific breeds will lay four eggs in five days.
- Commercial flocks are replaced after 72 weeks

Lead

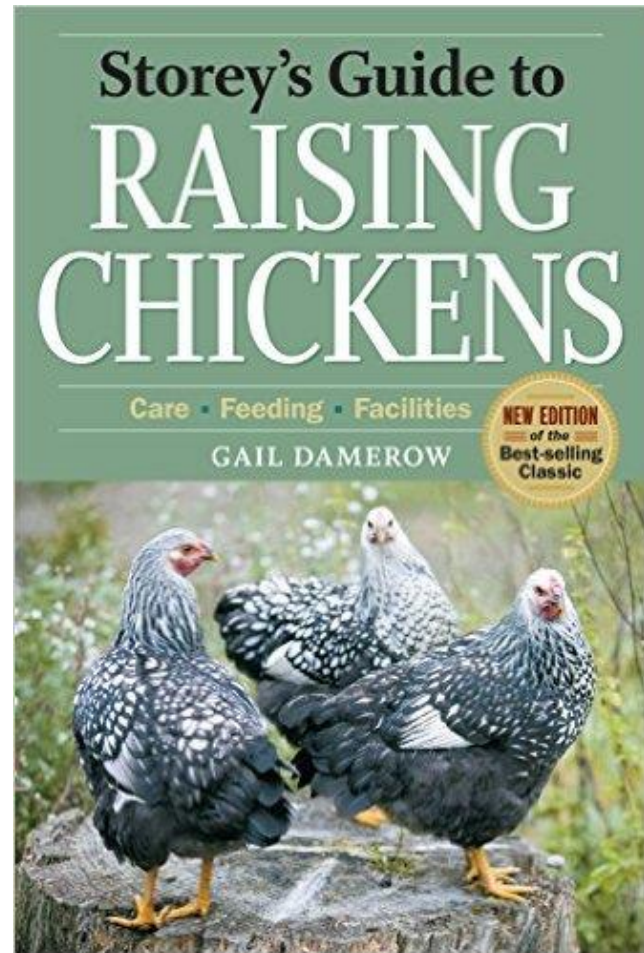
- If soil is contaminated with lead, chicken eggs may also be contaminated
 - Soil testing can be done by U Mass
 - Testing of eggs can be done by California Animal Health & Food Safety Laboratory System (CAHFS) at UC Davis
 - <http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/cahfs/about/locations/davis.cfm>

Egg Collection and Storage

- Collect eggs as often as possible
- Avoid washing eggs, as washing destroys the natural protective coating on the egg's exterior
- Refrigerate eggs within 12 hours of collection
- Wash eggs before use
- Wash hands after handling chickens or eggs
- Avoid manure contamination of clothing, shoes
- Don't kiss your chickens

Resources

- **Book: Storey's guide to raising chickens by Gail Damerow**
 - [Amazon](#)
- **California Animal Health & Food Safety Laboratory System**
 - <http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/cahfs/index.cfm>



Have Fun!

