



Always ensure that anyone handling poultry and equipment can wash their hands afterwards and small children do not put their fingers in their mouths before washing.

Obtain your poultry from a reputable source, buying only healthy stock at an age to suit your circumstances (from fertile eggs to point-of-lay).

Provide a secure, draught-free house and safe run. Moving it on to fresh ground from time to time is ideal.

Always make sure that fresh water is available (use a large, suspended drinker if leaving over the weekend).

Further Information

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GROWING WITH SCHOOLS

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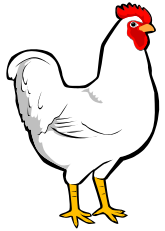
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GROWING WITH SCHOOLS



Poultry 101: Keeping Chickens in a School Environment.





Keeping poultry in schools is an easy and exciting beginning to keeping livestock in schools. All livestock keepers should hold in their minds the so called 5 freedoms as their guidance and general ethos:

- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from Pain and Injury
- Freedom to express normal behaviour
- Freedom from fear and distress

Cockerels are **not** required for a hen to lay eggs. She will even go broody and hatch out fertile eggs given to her, caring for the chicks as if they were her own.

Once established, they should at worst be revenue neutral – if the eggs can be sold not only as new-laid, but also free range, a slight profit should be shown. Remember that profit isn't simply cost of eggs over food, but cost of replacements/losses over the two year laying life of the bird.

Pure bred birds should produce 200+ eggs per year, hybrids 250+ (both would be higher if extra light was provided during the winter months).

Eggs can be sold to staff and parents in an 'at the farm gate' manner with no registration requirements. Only if more than 50 birds are kept (unlikely in schools) is the owner required to register with DEFRA.

Breeds

Chickens vary greatly in size, appearance, hardiness, character, rarity and purpose. Some are built to produce lots of eggs, some for their meat and some are dual-purpose. Others have been bred only for appearance. They lay a range of egg colours (making counting each hen's production easy):

- White Leghorn – white eggs
- Buff Sussex – tinted eggs
- Araucana - blue eggs
- Maran – dark brown

Bantams – these are smaller than large fowl. Many are smaller versions of their larger counter parts. Others, such as Pekins and Se-brights are naturally occurring. Bantams lay much smaller eggs than large fowl – but also eat correspondingly less! They often make very good broody hens.

Miniatures - These are usually bred-down versions of the larger breeds.

Pure Breeds – some are very rare and keeping them helps conserve the breed.

Hybrids– usually developed to be commercially more viable (e.g. Speckledy, Black Rock)

Autosexing Breeds - The advantage of autosexing birds – as their name would suggest - the chicks can be sexed at birth as they are different colours. Males can be disposed of at day old rather than keeping/feeding them for several months until they start crowing!

Care

Chickens are very undemanding creatures. They can become very used to being handled and many are very affectionate. They are extremely sociable and need the company of at least one other bird. They can be left securely confined over a weekend with enough food and water. They'll learn to put themselves to bed. Over the holidays they can be boarded somewhere if there is no one available to come in to school.

As well as pellets, chickens need grit in their diet. Free range birds will pick up greens and insects outside, but some mixed corn and cabbage leaves are always appreciated. Greens give egg yolks a lovely, deep orange colour.

Education

As well as teaching children how to care for living things, keeping poultry provides opportunities to discuss animal welfare, food chains, life cycles and genetics. Contact with livestock has proved to be greatly therapeutic and inspiring. Eggs can be counted, cooked and eaten, even sold as a business enterprise run by students.

