

A stylized, colorful illustration of a landscape. The foreground features rolling green hills with a brown path. On the left, there is a green tree, a purple flower, and an orange flower. A small red bird is flying in the sky. The background consists of layered blue and white waves representing the sky.

Back Yard Chickens for Beginners

Ulster County Extension Cooperative 2020

Why Get Chickens???

- Chickens are a great starter enterprise for people of all ages
- Chickens help to teach responsibility
- Chickens help little ones to understand life systems and talk about sensitive issues
- Chickens can teach about money and marketing
- Chickens are relatively safe but be careful around roosters
- Always be mindful of pets too



Know your goals

Fun or profit (or both?)

- Eggs

- 250 a year for 3-5 years
- Production decreases after 2 years,

- Broilers

- Who will process the chickens
- What are the laws regarding production

- Fertilizer and Friends

- One laying hen produces ATLEAST 50 lbs. of manure a year.
- This must be composted before use as a fertilizer

- Chickens can help in controlling Ticks on your property



Chickens Poop on Everything!



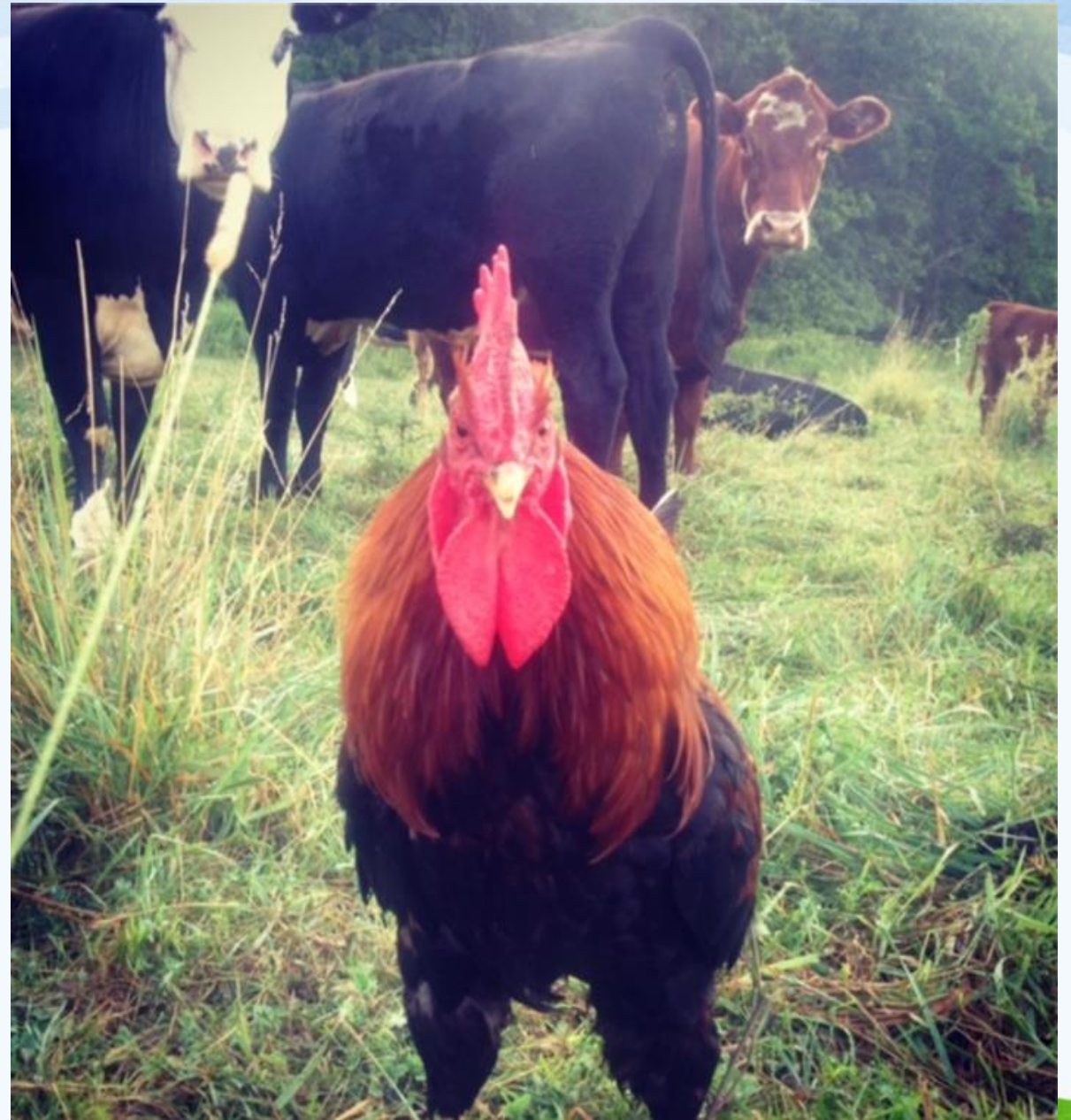
Know your town code

- Go to:
 - Your town's website
 - Or
 - <http://www.generalcode.com/codification/rcode/library>
- Regulations on:
 - Distance from residence
 - Distance from lot line
 - Usually between 50-150 feet
- No odor detectable beyond property line
- Keep housing clean, dry, odor-free, and neat at all
- times!



Know your neighbors!

- Check in with town board or city council **BEFORE** purchasing birds
- Tell your neighbors **BEFORE** you purchase birds
- Offer them eggs!
- No odor beyond property-line or leachate from manure
- Keep it clean, quiet, and neat at all times!
- Plan for end of life
- **NO ROOSTERS IN TOWNS**





BIOSECURITY

6 biosecurity tips from APHIS – USDA

- Keep your distance
- Keep it clean
- Don't haul disease home
- Don't borrow disease from your neighbor
- Know the warning signs of infectious bird diseases
- Report sick birds
- Quarantine new birds for 30 days

Animal Health Diagnostic Center

Improving the health of animals, animal populations and wildlife

[Order Tests](#)

[Submit Samples](#)



[CVM](#) > [Animal Health Diagnostic Center](#) > [Programs](#) >

Avian Health

Poultry Health at the AHDC

The Avian Health Program offers diagnostic testing, consultation and extension services for commercial and backyard poultry producers. We provide testing plans for covering one pet chicken, small flocks, or commercial producers.

Need on-farm assistance? If your poultry flock is within 100 miles of the AHDC, ask about professional on-site farm services for a disease investigation. Please [contact the Avian Health Program](#) for more information.

[Dr. Jarra Jagne](#), head of the Avian Health program and veterinarian specializing in poultry, a diplomate of the American College of Poultry Veterinarians, is available for disease, nutrition, health, and management consultation.

Avian Resources

- [Atlas of Avian Disease](#)
- [Avian Diagnostic Sample Collection Video](#)
- [Avian Necropsy Examination Video](#)

AVIAN HEALTH

[Publications](#)

[PRINT THIS PAGE](#)

Contact Avian Health

240 Farrier Road
Ithaca, NY 14853

Phone: [\(607\) 253-3900](tel:(607)253-3900)

Fax: [\(607\) 253-3943](tel:(607)253-3943)

Email: poultryhealth@cornell.edu

Wash your Hands!



*Yes poultry can contract strains of corona virus and flu,
Corvid-19 has not been found in poultry*

Don't kiss and Cuddle Chickens



Prevent!

Know your birds

Call if something is off

*Don't visit other chickens in
the same clothes*

GETTING STARTED – HOUSING

Space requirements

- 2ft² per bird + 4ft² run
- 8” roosting perch/bird

Equipment

- Feeders
- Waterers
- Nesting boxes
- 1 box/4 birds
- 12” high, 12” wide, 16” deep
- At least 18” off the floor
- Front panel 4” high to keep eggs from rolling out



What Type of Chickens for eggs?

Chicks, pullets, or adults

- Most breeds start laying at 20-24 weeks

Breeds

- Qualities to look for:
- Cold-hardy
- Robust
- Early- to moderate-maturing
- Average to above-average layers



Good Breed Choices for Backyard Layers in New York State

Ameraucana (“Easter-egger”)
Delaware
Dominique
New Hampshire
Orpington
Plymouth Rock
Rhode Island Red
Wyandotte



What Type of Chickens for Meat?

The infamous Cornish X (6-8 weeks)

The "Freedom Ranger" (9-11 weeks)

Heritage Breeds (16-18 weeks)

Dual Purpose Breeds (16-18 weeks)



Where to get your Birds

Most reputable sources

- Hatcheries
- Breeders

Other options

- Feed supply stores
- Meet-up groups or clubs

Not recommended

- Swap meets or “back-of-truck”



You Need a Brooder and a Coop

Brooder

- This takes the place of a momma hen
- Need chick sized supplies
- Need heat lamp!



Coop

- Shelters adult birds
- Need adult size supplies
- No lamps!



Setting up your brooder

.5-1ft² floor space/chick

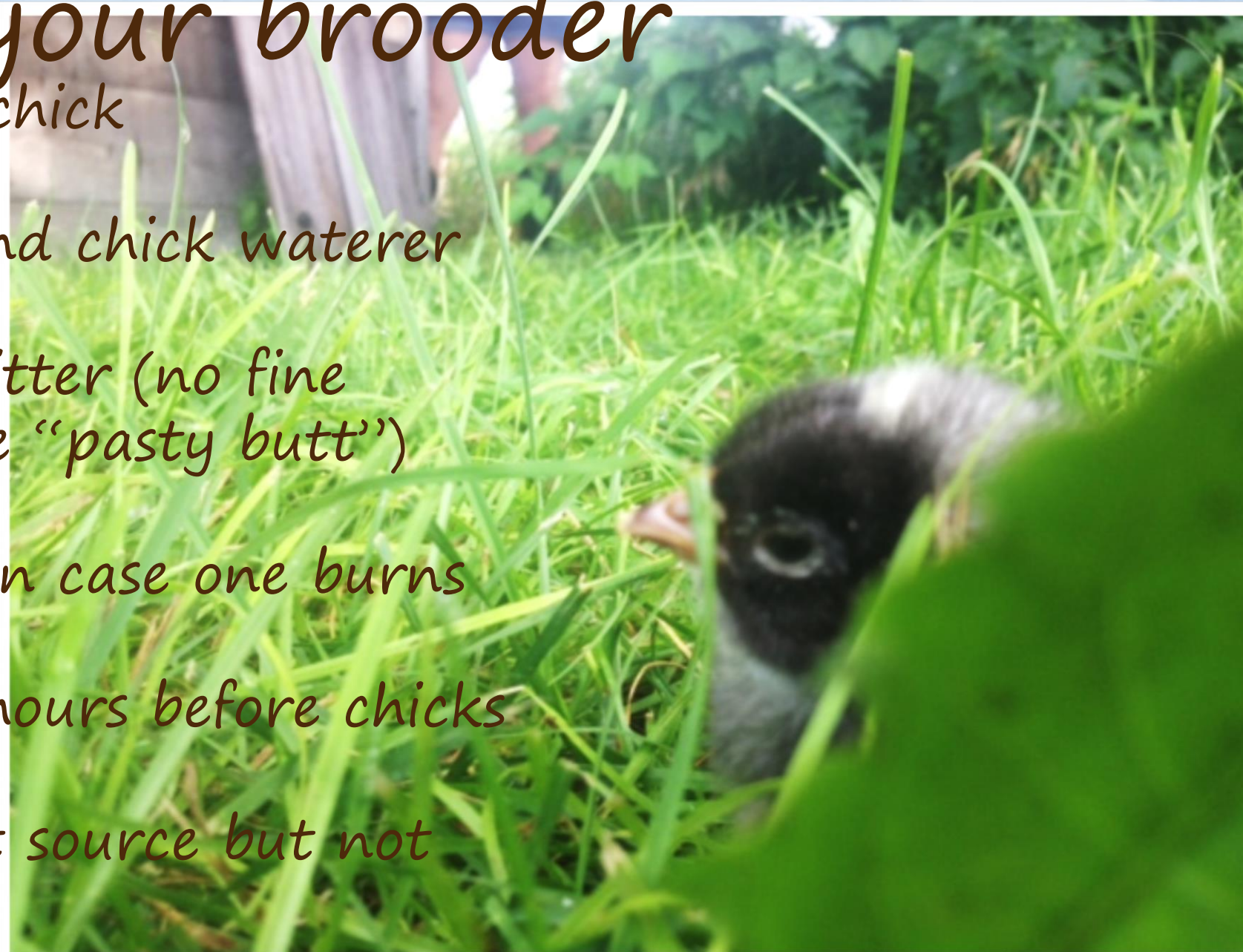
Need chick feeder and chick waterer

3" layer clean dry litter (no fine sawdust – can cause “pasty butt”)

Have 2 heat lamps in case one burns out

Set up brooder 24 hours before chicks arrive

Place feed near heat source but not directly underneath



DANGER DANGER DANGER



It can happen to you, it has happened to me!



BROODER TEMPERATURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Week 1 - 95 degrees

Week 2 - 90 degrees

Week 3 - 85 degrees

Week 4 - 80 degrees

Week 5 - 75 degrees

Week 6 - 70 degrees

Week 7 - 60 degrees

These are just recommendations - the faster you can wean your chicks off of the heat lamp, the faster they will feather and the better they will acclimate to changes in the outside weather conditions.

Lights vs. Heat Plates

DIAGRAM 5:

BIRD DISTRIBUTION UNDER BROODERS

TEMPERATURE TOO HIGH



Chicks make no noise
Chicks pant, head and wings droop
Chicks away from brooder

TEMPERATURE CORRECT



Chicks evenly spread
Noise level signifies contentment

TEMPERATURE TOO LOW



Chicks crowd to brooder
Chicks noisy, distress-calling

DRAUGHT



This distribution requires investigation
Influenced by draught - uneven light distribution -
external noises



GOALS Of Chicken Coop

Proper ventilation in summer with ability to close off in winter (need ventilation in winter too)

Predator-proof (that means all predators)

Can withstand weather (especially heavy snow)
Adequate space

Enough Space for Chickens to lay eggs and rest

Why Use a Chicken Tractor?

No manure handling and manure is distributed directly onto the ground

Tractors do not create dead zones drastically cutting down on odors and pests

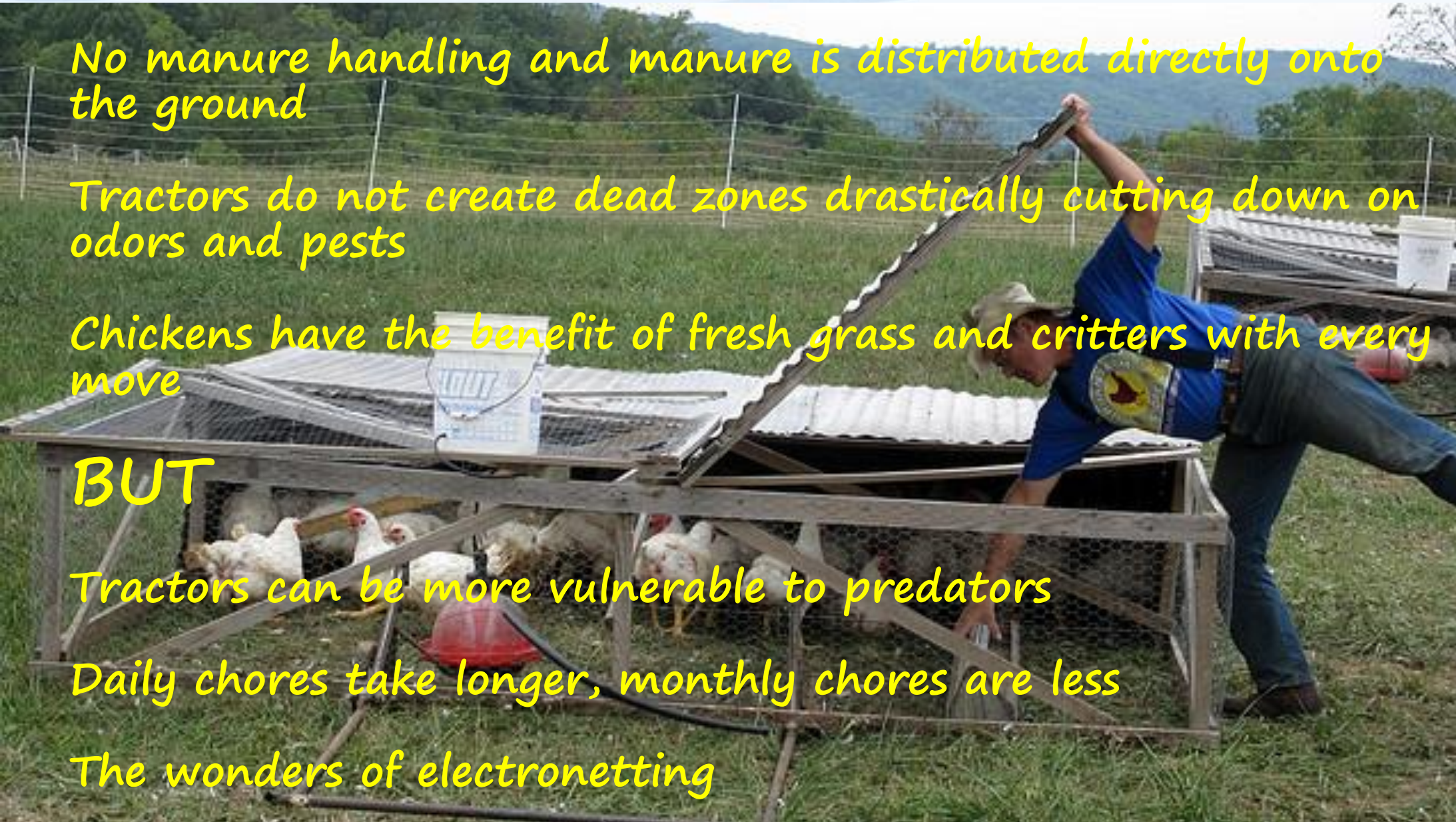
Chickens have the benefit of fresh grass and critters with every move

BUT

Tractors can be more vulnerable to predators

Daily chores take longer, monthly chores are less

The wonders of electronetting



MANURE MANAGEMENT

Six laying hens produce 12 cubic feet manure/year

- 150 to 500lbs manure!
- Plus bedding material waste – 200-700lbs/year
- Straw/hay
- Wood shavings/wood chips
- Sawdust
- Look at moisture absorption, cleaning ease, cost

Options:

- Cleaning coop thoroughly and disinfecting a couple times a year (sunlight and air is best)
- Pasturing or moving coop
- Composting



Chicken Nutrition and Feed

Starter feed for 0-6 weeks: 20% protein

Grower feed for 6-20 weeks: 18% protein

Laying ration for adults hens: 16% protein

For 6 layers: 2lb feed/day = 15 50lb bags of feed/year

- Don't store feed for longer than 1 month

Hanging feeders – raise outer lip to height of bird's back

Trough feeders

- More chickens can feed at once
- Messier, creates more opportunities for disease

Chickens who have access to pasture have access to insects, grasses, worms, and other animal and plant proteins. This added nutritional content tends to make their yolks very bright in color and bolder in flavor



Chicken Water Needs

Provide access at all times!

Full-grown layers drink 2 cups water a day,
more in warm weather

Chickens prefer water between 50-60°

Keep water clean and fresh

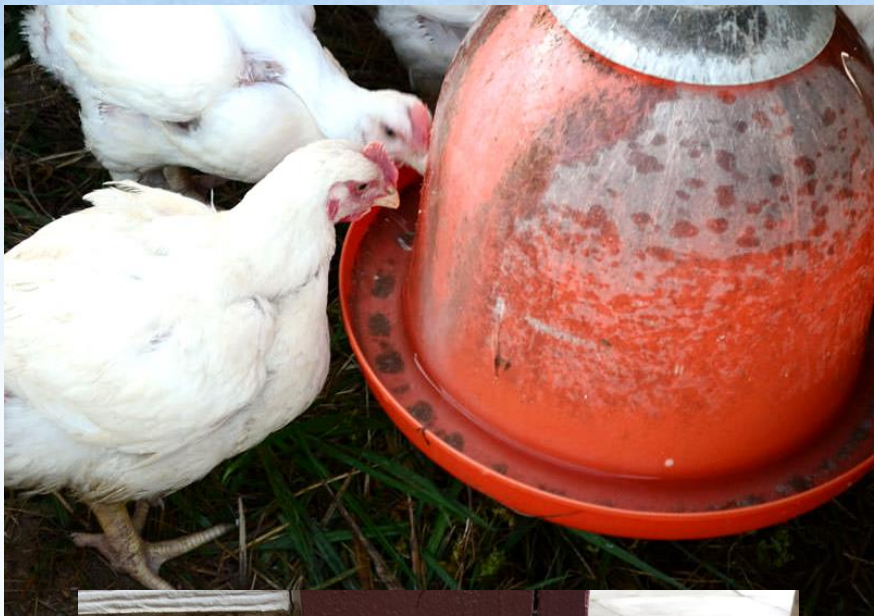
Place bottom of waterer at height of bird's
back

Place waterers within 15 feet of feeders

Clean out periodically to avoid build-up

- Apple cider vinegar





Supplementing your Chickens

Scratch

- Use as a treat/training tool

Oyster shell

- May not be necessary in free-ranging birds

Table scraps

- Feed only as much as birds can clean up in 20 min
- Clean up uneaten scraps to prevent botulism
- Should not be more than 5% of diet

Pasture as tonic

Apple cider vinegar



Scheduling your day and planning for absences

Morning chores

- Let chickens out to run
- Feed chickens
- Water chickens
- scrape the dropping board
- Collect eggs

Afternoon chores

- Collect eggs
- Close up chickens for the night

Monthly Chores

- clean out waterers
- add/ aerate bedding as needed



Who Will Do Chores When
you Are Gone???

Predators

All manner of critter from land to sea to sky will take an interest in making meal of your chickens. It is important to have a plan before you are aware of the predation.

Prevention is the best medicine. Be proactive with setting traps and checking your housing

Lethal tactics may be necessary to protect your flock

Watch out for neighborhood dogs



Predator Descriptions

Daytime: dogs, foxes, hawks

Night: raccoons, possums, owls, coyotes, fishers

Limit tree/bush cover around house

Predators don't like to travel across open ground

Secure coop, especially at night

Use hexagonal chicken wire with 1" openings - layer if necessary

Cover vents and windows with 1/4" hardware cloth

Screened outdoor runs



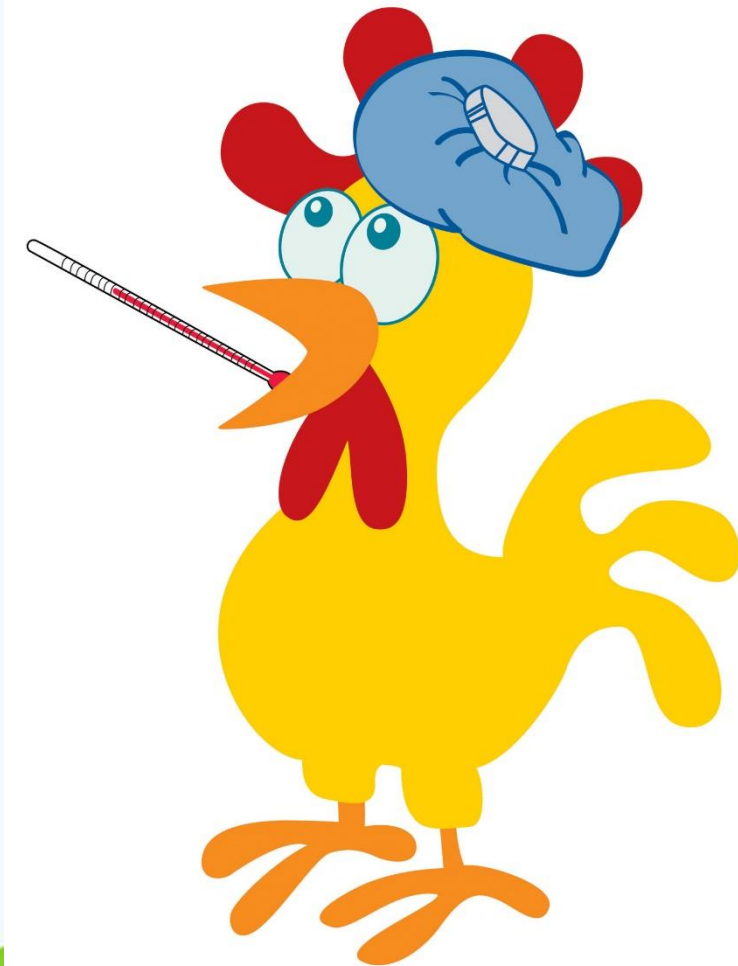
COMMON HEALTH ISSUES

Health/disease

- Buy chicks vaccinated for Marek's and Newcastle
- Quarantine all new birds for at least 2 weeks

Parasites – internal and external

- Coccidia
 - Lice
 - Mites
 - Prevention is the best method
- Keep things clean and dry



HOW TO DEAL WITH COLD WEATHER

- Keep water from freezing
- Add a couple handfuls of scratch to diet for extra energy
- Insulate with extra bedding
- Eliminate drafts
- Watch for frostbite

Utilize wind breaks

Take water out at night to avoid damp litter

Let's talk about lights in the Coop



HOW TO DEAL WITH EXTREMELY HOT WEATHER

- Provide cool, clean water at all times
- Provide shade
- Feed during the coolest times of the day
- Make sure the coop is well-ventilated with adequate air flow
- Don't overcrowd
- Keep birds in areas with low-cut grass



EGG-HANDLING

Keep things clean!

- Provide clean nesting material and change it once a week

Give birds enough roosting space to keep them from roosting in nest boxes

Collect eggs twice daily

Only wash the eggs that you have too, A clean nesting box should leave you with clean eggs

- Use rough sponge or a brush on dirt/debris

- Wash eggs in water room temperature water

- Store eggs at 35-40°



Children and Chickens

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Chickens help to teach responsibility

Chickens help little ones to understand life systems

Chickens can teach about money and marketing

Chickens are relatively safe but be careful around roosters

Always be mindful of pets too



How to Deal with aggressive roosters

- You are not a rooster so don't act like one
- Do not run away or scream
- Back away
- Provide snacks when they are acting appropriately
- Pick up roosting animals and hold them
- (wash hands)



Yes you can slaughter your own birds



*Marketing your eggs, or
What am I going to do with
20 eggs a week?*

*New York State Egg Laws
Circular 845
New York Eggs
(see handout)*

Give some away to neighbors

Feed to other animals in your house?



Ducks

- *Very similar to raising other poultry*
- *Ducklings need heat 2-4 weeks*
- *Need more water than chicks- drip waterers can be used*



Ducks

- Meat or Eggs



Breed	Adult Weight /lbs.	Eggs/year	Lbs./wks for Meat
Aylesbury	8-9F/9-10M	40-60	7/8
Buff	6-7F/7-8M	60-100	
Call	1.25F/1.5M	20-50	
Campbell	3.54F/4-4.5M	200-300	
Cayuga	6-7F/7-8M	60-100	7/12-16
Crested	5-6F/6-7M	60-100	
East Indie	1.4F/1.7M	20-50	
Magpie	4-4.5F/4.5-5M	30-60	
Mallard	2F/2.5M	20-50	
Muscovy	6-7F/10-12M	60-120	10-12/10-16
Pekin	8-9F/9-10M	100-180	6-7/7-8
Rouen	8-9F/9-10M	40-60	6-8/12-15

Ducks

- *Messy!!*
- *Easy to move - can be herded*
- *Ready for processing in 49 days*



A modern duck raising barn is clean and well ventilated.



Ducks

- Eggs!
- Commercial laying chickens will lay up to 280 eggs per year—ducks can lay 300–350 per year!
- Eggs are slightly larger, but ducks will consumer more feed
 - Will forage more than chickens if given the opportunity



Geese

- Broiler type geese can reach 9# in 8-9 weeks or heavy type geese can reach 12-14# in as many weeks
- Ability to consumer large quantities of grass (up to 50% of the diet)
- Strong flocking instinct



Geese

- Loud
- Can be aggressive
- Great guard animals!



Exotics... wait



RESOURCES

Cornell Cooperative Extension of
Ulster County

Jason Detzel, Livestock Educator
jbd222@cornell.edu 845-340-
3990

Storey's Guide to Raising Chickens

APPPA – American Pastured
Poultry Producers Association

Chicken Tractor – The

Permaculture Guide to Happy Hens
and Happy Soil

Northeast Beginning Farmers
Project

Cornell Small Farms Program
backyard chickens.



KEEP IN TOUCH!!!

- *Put your email in the chat box to receive our newsletter*
- *Check out our webpage*
- *Contact me if you need any help!*
- *jbd222@cornell.edu*
- *Find a mentor*

I was bored. My parents have chickens.
I apologize for nothing.



Supporting your CCE: Stay Connected!

- Like/Follow your County's Extension on social media
- Sign Up for our newsletter and visit our websites:
 - www.Ulster.CCE.Cornell.edu
 - www.Rockland.CCE.Cornell.edu
- Attend more programs
- Tell your friends and family to connect with us
- Write to your Elected Officials about how much you appreciate CCE
- Volunteer with our programs
- Contribute to our fundraising campaigns



2020 Fall Backyard Poultry Course
@ Cornell Small Farms

*The holder of this document is
now a certified beginning
chicken grower*

*You have officially graduated
from the Ulster County
Cooperative Beginner
Chicken Program 2016
May your chickens be healthy
and your eggs be plenty*

*This document has no monetary value but may be used
to impress friends and relatives*

