

# All about Chickens

*"Learn New Information or Learn More about Chickens"*

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**Chickens:** Chickens are domestic birds that cannot fly. There are over 150 different breeds of chickens. They have a large range of colors, patterns, and sizes. There are three different types of chickens. Laying breeds are used for laying eggs. Meat birds are used for their meat. Dual-purpose chickens are used for both meat and eggs. A female chicken is called a hen; a male chicken is called a rooster; young chickens are called chicks or pullets. Roosters can be differentiated from hens by their long flowing tails and bright pointed feathers on their necks. The rooster is larger and more brightly colored than the hen, he also has a larger comb on top of his head.

**Laying Birds:** Hens start laying eggs at about the age of 20 weeks and a hen can't lay more than one egg daily. You don't need to keep a rooster for your hens to produce eggs. Hens lay on a regular schedule whether or not a rooster is present. You should provide your hens with ground-up oyster shells to ensure they receive sufficient calcium.

**Meat Birds:** Chickens that are specifically raised for meat are commonly known as Broilers. Broilers make great meat chickens because they grow faster than chickens that are raised for egg-laying. By the time they are 10 weeks old, they can easily reach 10 pounds, which is the ideal size for an average size family. One example is Cornish Cross.

**Chicken Diet:** Chickens are omnivores and will feed on small seeds, herbs and leaves, grubs, insects and even small mammals, like mice. Chickens often scratch at the soil to get at adult insects and larva or seeds. Domestic chickens are typically fed commercially prepared feed that includes a protein source as well as grains. A big brand of this food is Kent Chicken Food. Chickens have a well-developed gizzard (a part of the stomach that contains tiny stones) that grinds up their food, but if your hens never leave the coop, you must also have grit available, to aid in digestion. Grit refers to a finely ground hard substance that is given to chickens. There are two types of poultry grit: oyster shell grit and flint grit. Oyster Shell grit is a type of calcium that helps make egg shells stronger. Flint grit helps chickens with digestion.

**Chicks:** Baby chickens are called chicks, 3 months old females are called pullets (until they start laying eggs around 6 months). After a mother hen lays eggs, she sits on them for almost 24 hours a day until it hatches. After 21 days of incubation, a baby chick will hatch by pecking its way out of the egg. The chick grows very quickly and doubles in size in its first two weeks. They start growing adult feathers almost immediately and reach full size in 20 weeks, and can lay eggs of their own at 6 months old. From day one, a chick can recognize its mother's calls. The chick stays close to them for the first 12-16 weeks to help keep them warm, and to learn how to be a chicken.

## All about Goats

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**Goats:** Goats were one of the first animals to be tamed by humans. There are two types of goats; mountain goats and domestic goats. We will be talking about domestic goats. Goats can be taught their name and they will come when called. Counter to the stereotype about goats being willing to eat anything, they are actually very picky eaters. They will often refuse to eat hay that has been walked on or lying around loose for a day. Goats, being mountain animals, are also very good at climbing; they've been known to climb to the top of trees, or even dams!

**Dairy Goats:** In much of the developing world, goat milk is the primary milk source for humans. Goat milk is often sought for its perceived health benefits and unique taste. The fat globules are smaller than those in cow milk and the curd is softer and smaller, making the digestive easier. Those who are allergic to cow milk may tolerate and thrive on goat milk. The eight major dairy goat breeds in the United State are Saanen, Sable, Nubian, Toggenburg, LaMancha, Oberhasli, Nigerian Dwarf, and Alpine.

**Meat Goats:** The meat of the goat is called chevon or cabrito. Cabrito is from kids harvested within the first week of birth. Chevron is from older kids. Goat meat is leaner than poultry and other red meats, low in fat and cholesterol, and is a source of conjugated linoleic acid. It can be barbecued, baked, fried, broiled, or stewed. The main meat goat breeds are Boer, Spanish, and Pygmy.

**Diet:** Goats are herbivores, which means they eat only vegetation. Their favorite food is grass, though mountain goats also eat mosses and plants. Many domestic goats will also eat trash, house plants, or any other items they find lying around. Goats grab food with their lips and bring it into their mouths. The upper jaw is wider than the lower jaw, so they can only use one side of their mouths to grind the food. This causes the rotary movement that is seen when a goat is chewing. Goats are ruminants, and like cattle, they have four stomach compartments. The rumen can hold 4 to 6 gallons; the reticulum can hold up to 0.26 to 0.5 gallons; the omasum can hold up to 0.2 to 1 gallon. It takes 11 to 15 hours for food to pass through a goat's digestive system.

**Kidding:** Goats have a gestation period (pregnancy) of five months and the average birth rate in goats is 2.2 kids per year. Baby goats (kids) are standing and taking their first steps within minutes of being born. Each kid has a unique call, and a scent, that is how its mother recognizes it from birth - not by sight. Does normally produce between one and three kids per year. Single-born kids weigh approximately 6 to 6.5 pounds at birth. Birth weights generally decline with multiple births and are often associated with increased mortality. Goats need to be bottle-fed for about five to eight weeks. They need a bottle three to four times per day until they are two to two and a half times their birth weight and comfortable eating dry food.

