Biosecurity Tips

Keep Disease Out

Limit contact with outside birds, people, and equipment to prevent disease.

Keep it Clean

Clean and disinfect shoes, coops, tools, and hands to stop germs from spreading.

Keep Wild Birds + Pests Away

Control rodents and wild birds to reduce disease risks.

Watch for Illness

If sickness is found, separate sick birds from healthy birds.

Report Deaths

Report unusual deaths to your veterinarian or an animal health official in your state.

Fun Facts

Egg Hunt

Collect eggs twice daily to keep them clean and prevent egg-eating.

Chickens Recognize Faces

They can remember over 100 people and animals and tell them apart.

Resources

www.healthybirds.info

Facebook
Small Flocks Collaborative

Instagram
@smallflocks_healthybirds

BIRD BASICS FOR YOUR SMALL FLOCKS

What to know before raising poultry

Use these tips and guidelines to care for your birds

SMALL FLOCKS COLLABORATIVE

Sourcing Birds

Where to Get Birds

1. Hatcheries, Feed Stores, or Local Breeders

- Choose sellers with good biosecurity and health records, like National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP)-certified flocks.

2. Straight Run vs. Sexed Chicks

- Straight run = unsexed chicks, about half male and half female.
- Need hens? Buy sexed chicks.

Hatching Your Own

1. Egg Incubation Times

- Chickens 21 days
- Ducks 28 days
- Turkeys 28-30 days

2. Keep it Clean

- Sanitize the incubator before and after each hatch. Bacteria can kill chicks before they emerge.

3. Humidity + Timing Matter

- Once hatching starts, keep the lid closed. It may take 24 hours or more from the first pip to hatch.

Housing + Brooding

Brooder Stage

1. Heat Source

- Use a heat lamp or brooder plate. Set at 90-95°F first week, then drop 5°F per week until fully feathered.

2. Space Matters

- 1 sq. ft. per chick in the brooder to prevent crowding.

Basic Coop Setup

1. Bird Spacing

- Inside: 2-4 sq. ft. per bird in the coop.
- Outside: 8-10 sq. ft. per bird in a secure run.

2. Roosts

- 8-10 inches per bird, higher than nest boxes to keep eggs clean.

3. Ventilation + Light

- Windows or vents = fresh air + fewer health issues.

4. Nesting Boxes

- 1 box per 3-5 hens, mounted lower than roosts. External boxes with a hatch make egg collection easy.

5. Predator Protection

- Use secure latches, hardware cloth and bury fencing to keep out any predators.

Flock Nutrition

Feed by Life Stage

(Protein shown as %)

1. Chicks

- Starter feed, 18–20 % (0–6 weeks)

2. Pullets and Young Birds

- Grower feed, 15–18 % (from 6–20 weeks)

3. Laying Hens

- Layer feed, 16–18 % + calcium once laying starts

3. Broilers

- Starter 22–24 % (0–3 weeks)
- Grower 20–22 % (3–6 weeks)
- Finisher 18–20 % (6–8 weeks)

4. Ducks + Gamebirds

- Some breeds need extra niacin to prevent leg problems.

Feed & Water Basics

1. Feed + Water Always Available

- Chickens need constant access to fresh water and a balanced feed.

2. Have Enough Feed

- A 6-lb hen eats ~3 lbs of feed per week, so make sure you have enough feed on hand.

3. Budget

- Feed can be expensive and is a recurring fee. Plan ahead.