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The Beginner's Guide to Raising Backyard Chickens

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One of the most helpful domesticated animals is the chicken. Not only are these creatures fun to observe, but they're also amazing food producers and natural soil builders for your land. And we can't forget the nutritious food products that come from chickens, such as their meat and eggs. Eggs that free-range chickens produce are full of vitamins and minerals, as well as essential amino acids that are necessary for good health.

Backyard chicken coops are surprisingly common, even for people who aren't farmers. However, if you have no experience caring for chickens, you probably have a lot of questions about what having a coop is like: Does it smell? Are the chickens noisy? How much work is it really?

Here, we're going to answer these questions and help you decide if raising backyard chickens is the right decision. Learn more about what raising backyard chickens is really like below!

1. Check Your Local Laws

If you live in the middle of nowhere, this may not be a concern for you at all. However, if you are looking for suburban chicken keeping, your local city, state, and HOA ordinances may have something to say about it.

Some areas ban roosters due to their noise, and others may ban raising chickens altogether. Check your local regulations before you get too deep into this plan.

2. Get Your Chicks

If you're raising chickens from newly hatched chicks, you'll need to get a brooder. This is a hen-like environment for your baby chicks to thrive and grow in.

According to [Dalton Engineering](#), you'll need a plywood or cardboard box filled with corn cob bedding (which is easier on the young chicks lungs compared to traditional pine shavings).

Your brooder should provide the following for the chicks:

- Food
- Water
- Warmth
- Cleanliness

- Security

Invest in a nicer heated brooder setup to avoid the fire risk of a regular heat lamp.

When you get the chicks, look to get chicks that are predetermined to be hens. After you've brought them home and cared for them, you can even give them a taste of the outdoors if the weather is warm enough.

3. Set Up the Permanent Housing

Newly hatched chicks need to be in a brooder for around six weeks before being moved to a coop, which gives you just enough time to build your own permanent housing coop setup. You can find premade coops out there, but it can also be fun (not to mention cheaper) to build your own.

You'll need bedding in three locations:

- The nesting boxes
- The hen houses
- The run

Good material options for these are straw for the nesting boxes, cob for the hen house, and sand for the run.

4. To Range or Not to Range

If your local ordinances allow for a range outside of their enclosed run, then you have the option to set this up. Free roaming chickens is a nice thought, in theory. However, it can be tricky to keep them safe from any predators. If you do go for this risk, you'll have the healthiest eggs and the happiest chickens.

5. Move Your Chickens In!

Slowly start to introduce your teenage chicks to the outdoors until they're ready to permanently move into their coop. All that's left to do is wait. If you keep your chickens watered, fed, and clean their coop regularly, you should start to see some eggs in a few months.

6. Enjoy Parenthood

With an established flock and eggs being laid, your work is complete. Continue to stock your coop with fresh food and water, collect any recently laid eggs, and enjoy life as a new chicken parent.

Photo by William Moreland on Unsplash

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