

Keeping Chickens Newsletter

If you know anyone who may enjoy this newsletter please let them know that they can subscribe at:

www.KeepingChickensNewsletter.com



November 2011
Vol.1

Hi

Welcome to my Keeping Chickens Newsletter.

Thanks to everyone who has sent in their keeping chickens tips, stories and photos etc. - as usual, if you have anything chicken related (tips, photos, stories, questions, coops etc.) you'd like to share in future issues of the newsletter or blog posts then just email news@self-sufficient-life.com and I will do my best to answer / include them.

Best Wishes

Gina

Subscriber Letters



Pauline : Hello Gina, first I would like to say I love the newsletter and look forward to reading it every month. I have been given some chickens but was wondering if someone knew what sort they were? From the picture can you tell me if they are cockerels as well, they are not crowing yet but I have a feeling they are. Regards Pauline.

My Reply : *I'm not very good at telling breeds, but I thought they might be male red sex-links which would be closer in colour to white than red – does anyone recognise what breed these are?*

Chloe : So excited! I got my first egg from my hens! It seemed to take forever. I am now only getting about 3 eggs a day from my 22 hens, but I have hope. I still call my hens chicks sometimes! I guess I just got in the habit. ☺ I just have to tell all you other chicken owners: The first egg is so exciting! It is when finally all the hard work really pays off. I am really enjoying the newsletter and all the advice! Thanks, Chloe

Boni : I was glad to read about the people that hung a picture for the chickens to look at. When I hung pictures and wall art in the chicken coop, my friends thought I was a little batty, but it was fun. Then, I decided they needed curtains on their coop window, so I bought people fabric -- fabric with a people print -- and made curtains for them. I figure that people hang chicken curtains; I can hang people curtains for my chickens. I have 5 now. I have a rooster named Pedro that just insists on sleeping in a tree. I've locked him in the coop for days at a time, and he'll go to the coop for awhile. Then, back to the tree. I also have a little black silkie named Little Peep that still hasn't been accepted in the flock. She is an outsider, but Pedro does protect her. She also won't go to coop at night. I have to put her in. Keeping up with my chickens keeps me busy and gives me great stories to tell my friends.



Fritz the Secret Resident of an Unnamed City!

Fritz is a bantam of the Old English Game Cock variety. He arrived as a chick in a handful of unsexed bantams I purchased in Santa Rosa, CA mid April this year, and along with another black rooster and 6 hens grew into beautiful birds - he is the only clearly identifiable breed. The larger noisier black boy moved on, one of the hens unfortunately did not survive (one by unfortunate accident and one by sudden collapse), leaving 4 healthy hens and Fritz (along with our six standard layers). Now Fritz is clearly in charge of the xxx flock in his not be named location. On our farm before we moved to the unnamed city, we had many birds and a thriving egg business. Now we have a tiny new egg business - the girls just began to lay in earnest last month - with friends and neighbors. Just enough egg \$\$ comes in for the girls to pay for their own feed (which is way more expensive in our xxx city than it was on the east coast) and we mostly eat the bantam eggs at home - with their seashell hard shells!

Anyway, Fritz is illegal. Roosters are NOT allowed in (unnamed). One neighbor next door asked us in the beginning (chick stage), "Will you have a rooster? We don't want a noisy rooster next door." They seemed trepidacious, probably because we share a tree near both of our bedrooms (on either side of it) in which some unidentified wild bird who loudly chirps "Beep-Beep-Beep" every morning before dawn and wakes us up! No such problem with Fritz and his crowing. Yes he does crow, but he's in the back of the house on the highway side. The neighbors just don't seem to care and enjoy him because he is tiny and colorful AND we live close enough to the highway -- that the noise pretty much

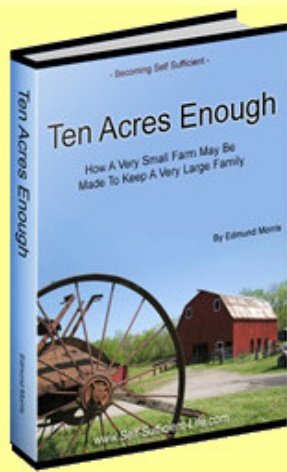
obliterates the pretty much continuous crows of Fritz. He can be heard all the way to the street if the wind is right, but so far, so good, no one seems to know or care that we are housing a possible fugitive from the law in our chicken yard. And we have more potential egg purchasers than eggs at this point.

Next time I will write about our efforts (moderately successful so far) in problem solving egg eating - a glitch we never had when we had 50 birds back on the farm in our previous life! *Cheska.*

Lynda : Gina, please share the dangers of tarps and the new plastic bags. Both are subject to stringing out after too much attention from the chickens. These can kill them if eaten! I had a little chick who tried to eat one of the strings and it wrapped around his tongue. He pulled to try to get himself unstuck and it cinched around it. When I found him his tongue had swollen to twice its normal size and I could see the string but couldn't get under it even with my embroidery scissors. I had to use a razor blade, and thankfully I was able to cut only the string. (Yes, his tongue and my nerves did return to normal by the end of the day!) ~ Love your newsletter, Lynda

LS : Suddenly noticed my hens that free range over 3 acres have taken to eating mice, they are fed ad lib, is this usual? At this time of year when the harvest has gathered rats and mice abound, but I have never noticed them enjoying this feast. Love the newsletter

My Reply : *They will eat pretty much anything unfortunate enough to get too close (mice, rats, frogs etc.) They can be pretty relentless and attack something as a group - even each other if one is weak or bleeding.*



Ten Acres Enough

How A Very Small Farm May Be Made To
Keep A Very Large Family

Ten Acres Enough is a self-sufficiency classic written by Edmund Morris, and is his personal story of his journey from city businessman to farmer. In this book Edmund details the first 3 years of his 'back to the land' experience and explains honestly what worked for him and what did not.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)



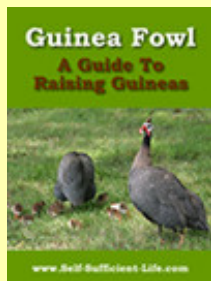
Dawn : I would like some advice please. My hen has been laying eggs without shells! I am not sure which hen it is but suspect it is my youngest hen. She is huge (my biggest) and completely free range so I don't think it has anything to do with her size but perhaps her age?



Is this normal for pullet eggs? Is there a nutritional deficiency? How do I fix it? Can we still eat the eggs? It is spring here in Cape Town. My hens have not been laying well since the older hen moulted a few months ago. I have given them extra sunflower seeds, crushed eggs shells and different grains to supplement their diet but there should be plenty of bugs and worms around. In the photograph, she is the brownish yellow one closest to the dog.



My Reply : *Pullets new to laying can take a few months to settle into laying 'normal' eggs so it could just be that. Soft shells and no shells can be a sign of vitamin D and / or calcium deficiency (they need vitamin D to be able to absorb the calcium). In theory they should get everything they need from a complete layers feed but if they get lots of treats and/or are eating a lot of other things whilst free ranging then that may affect the balance of nutrition and so sometimes cutting back on the extras can help to establish if the issue might be nutritional. Calcium such as crushed oyster shell in addition to some grit (both offered in individual bowls) are common supplements which may help egg shell quality, although other causes of soft shells can include heat, age, reproductive disorders, infection and/or high saline levels in the water. Parasites can also potentially affect laying.*



Guinea Fowl

A Guide To Raising Guineas

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)



Pam Rampmaier : I wanted to share pictures of our coop with your readers. My husband built it without plans, just a knowledge of what was needed and looking at other plans. Of course, he is a builder, but I'm proud of it anyway. My girls seem to like it, too.



Elaine : Hi, My name is Elaine I live in Scotland, I am loving your newsletter hearing about everybodys chooks, from over the pond! I have black rocks, light sussex, hybrids, buff orpingtons which I will be breeding next year hopefully.



The only real predators that we have are foxes, but as long as the chooks are securely locked up at night, they should be fine. I have a large garden fenced off so that my chooks can free range all day undisturbed.



I have three coops, one for mixed girls, one for cockerel and orpys, one for broody birds or young ones. It's fine in the summer if you can call it summer it's light 4.30am and not dark until 11pm, but the winter was severe last year and dark 3.30pm and not light until 8am or thereabouts. When it's winter you can't really interact with your birds a great deal. Really looking forward to breeding my orpingtons in the spring, fingers crossed.



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L. S. I sent the following to a friend who wanted to know how I found out one of my bantam hens was blind. She has just started taking the news letter and she suggested I also sent it on to you : “The bants were hatched here in a covered run and when they were old enough they went out into a run just under the dining room window, they got the idea of coming in and out found their food etc, then the braver ones did what they usually did and fluttered over the fence to join their big cousins who had often flown over to visit them. As there were fewer I noticed one would not come out of the house, and got to calling her "not going out"! Then the wretched fox came and numbers went down, I would pick her up and gradually realised her sight was wrong, so put her food in the house she found the water OK. Also I would open the window and talk to her and drop treats out when she came near, well of course the big ones fluttered over the fence to get the best but she caught on, so she gets visitors, from her greedy relations. She laid AN EGG I thought she was probably male, now we get 6 a week! She seems quite happy. I would love to have her with the others, but they are on such a large area (3 acres) and there is no way I could round her up; the ground is very lumpy and my legs are very unstable, poor Chris has enough to do. There would be a chance her brother might ‘interfere with her’!”



## 200 Eggs a Year

Chicken Care Guide

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)



*Mona* : Hello Gina I'm a novice when it comes to chickens and your newsletter has really helped with all the questions on how to house and feed chickens. I was given what I thought was one hen and one rooster but it turned out to be two roosters. Blackie and Ozzie . Blackie loves to be held and scratched behind the neck but Ozzie doesn't care to be handled.



Step by Step chicken coop plans for four different coop designs and sizes - including this midsize chicken coop for up to 4 chickens.

Build Your Own Chicken Coop  
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The complex block contains a photograph of a wooden chicken coop on the left, which has a nesting box on top and a wire mesh base. To the right of the photo is a diagram of a chicken coop structure with labels for various parts: Back Wall, Front Wall, Side Wall, Floor, Roof, and Nesting Box. Below the diagram is the text 'Step by Step chicken coop plans for four different coop designs and sizes - including this midsize chicken coop for up to 4 chickens.' At the bottom of the block is the text 'Build Your Own Chicken Coop' followed by a blue link 'Click Here To Learn More'.