

Keeping Chickens Newsletter

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

www.KeepingChickensNewsletter.com



October 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

Sue and John : Thank you for your news letters. Following on the "Feeding" trend in Septembers issue, we would like to pass on a cheap nutritious tip. Grow loads of Sunflowers! There that was easy wasn't it? Seriously the girls LOVE them. Enjoy the benefits of easy growing and a lovely display, then wait for them to dry out. Pick the heads and store them. Toss them in daily as a lovely treat for them. You will be amazed how much the girls love them . Sue and John Devon England

Toni : Re: the winters in Ohio and keeping your chickens from getting bored. I have 70 + chickens that I pasture. The past 2 winters we had 3-5 ft. of snow in my pastures... too deep for the chickens. So I would shovel paths to our llama barn and hay barn where the chickens like to hang out under the overhangs etc. It took them a bit to learn to stay in the paths and larger areas that I shovelled out. This gave them room to run so they wouldn't go stir crazy. I also shovelled out their runs on a daily basis, as that is where I'd feed them their treats for the day. I have 4 daughters and 2 of my brothers that save me "chicken food" left over rice, stale cereals, potatoes, greens, tops off radishes, carrot tops and peelings, apples, peaches, pears, bananas...other veggies and fruits...etc ,etc (instead of doggie bags when we go to a restaurant, we ask for a container for our chickens...) Our chickens get a variety of good things to eat and my relatives don't feel guilty throwing things away because it's for the chickens. They then benefit from eating wonderful eggs!! I also start my chicks out on grass I cut up small with scissors...it isn't messy, it's good for them, and it keeps them from being bored. Of course they have their regular chicken feed available 24/7. In the winter I keep heat lamps on 24/7 and utilize 1 ½gal. heated dog dishes for their water ...which works great. I don't let the chickens out when the temp. is below 20 degrees....I don't want them getting frostbite.

Kim : To Sandra in Camden, Michigan! You are my hero! In the September issue you put up a recipe for the perfect hard boiled egg. Normally if I know I'm going to make deviled eggs, I age my eggs for at least two weeks in the fridge - and still I end up with a mess when I'm trying to peel them. After reading your suggestion to steam the eggs, I headed straight for my chicken coop. My eggs weren't more than a couple hours from hatching and I followed your recipe. I was absolutely amazed how easy they were to peel. I'm sitting here right now eating the perfect deviled egg! Thank you so much for sharing. FINALLY! Someone came up with hard boiled egg perfection! Kim Mattson, Minnesota

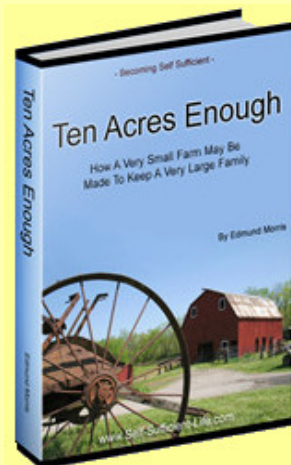
Liz : The article about boiled eggs that peel easily was most interesting. I tried the steaming method straight away, except I forgot to put a hole in them. I was amazed that every one peeled easily and perfectly! Wondering if anyone has a scientific explanation for why steaming works so well? Liz Willemsen

Cathy : Why are people so concerned about putting scraps such as lettuce on the dirt?? Chickens need dirt, Grit, for digestion. I just throw everything in the run. I don't use any container. I've had my flock for almost 3 years.

Michelle : This is in response to all of the people with suggestions about how to keep chicken salad off of the ground. It is my experience that chickens like it on the ground. That way they can scratch and peck and maybe even get a little grit. I have tried both ways and the chickens seem to prefer it on the ground.

Also, to Ruth, I use pine shavings and we are getting a wood chipper which will have a similar effect. I have a neighbor who swears that a base layer of dead leaves is the best way. We both use the deep bedding method, which is less work for you, healthier for the chickens and they like having the deep bedding to scratch in when they can't go out because of the snow. My chickens love to eat snow, but would never voluntarily set foot in anything deeper than about a 1/4 inch. Michelle, Beldenville, WI

Dorothy : In response to the reader who asked about a good way to feed treats to chickens, we have a good system. We push a rod through a whole head of cabbage and hang it from a pole across two stakes. The 9 girls will eat a large cabbage in a day. Another way with corn, apples, and stalks of celery is to drive a nail (s) into a block of wood and push the item onto the nail. Each system keeps the food from the dirt. The cabbage system provides an activity for the chickens.



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](#)



Jan : To respond to the fellow chicken lover about dogs, I have a horrifying experience to relate. All I can say at the start, is that having a GREAT rooster is a benefit. I had sent the newsletter pictures of my Silver Wyandotte Rooster "Charley" previously. Last Saturday we had a dog attack on my flock. They are free range as my pictures have shown. I was home, but in the basement and didn't hear a thing. I walked into the basement (my sewing room) and about an hour later, I went to check the flock. I was stunned to find a dead hen outside my door. I couldn't imagine what happened to her.....then I noticed TWO dogs going up my driveway. Panic set in. I started looking for the flock...No luck. I was terribly upset and got in my Kabota 4x4 and started hunting for them. Finally, a few straggled back and after an hour, Charley brought most of the flock home. He must have put us a valiant fight. All his tail feathers were yanked out and he has bite marks on his thigh. I counted heads and found two more missing. I thought three were gone, but when I went to feed the horses, two came out from under the tack room. Very injured. One limps badly and the other limps, has no tail feathers and when I treated her, found injuries sustained all along her back. Charley must have tried to save his girls, and succeeded in saving twenty and losing just one. I am very proud of him!! Tomorrow will be a week, and the are still alive and I haven't detected any infection. All this because of an inconsiderate neighbor and her dogs. Now I sit outside with the three 10 week old chicks and a shotgun when I let them out for their forage time. Just to let everyone know to be on their guard ALL the time. I also bought two baby monitors and have one in the house and one in the basement. Peace of mind... sort of (We have coyote, fox and hawks, who would have thought dogs!) Jan in Mossy Head, FL

Pat : I read someplace about the “Deep Litter Method” and I have used it for over a year. I periodically add bales of shredded pine shavings on top of the chicken yard area and in their house. The layer of shavings is several inches deep and has decomposed into compost. The chickens scratch in it and keep it stirred and there is no odor and you really don't see many droppings (even under the roost poles). They had scratched some out around the edges of the pen last fall and I raked it up and put it around my peonies - I never had such beautiful blooms as this spring.

I also keep a fly trap on the ends of the two outside roost poles that extend out of the sides of the pen; they are a jar with a lid that lets the flies in but then can't get back out. You fill the jar about $\frac{2}{3}$ full of water and put about 1 tbs. of the attractant in the water. It smells awful but I don't have any flies in my chicken pen. In 2 summers I have killed millions of flies. The instructions said to bury the dead flies 6 inches deep and they make good fertilizer. I can't imagine where that many flies come from since I live in town but I don't think there should be many left in the neighborhood. I get the fly traps at a farm store in Joplin, Mo

I never thought I would cry over a chicken but, this summer was so hot and I went out and found three of my Buff Orpingtons lying in the pen dead. There were several days that got up to 110 degrees. I usually went out and sprayed their yard and house with cool water and made sure they had fresh cool water but I was gone that day until late in the afternoon. I had a fan blowing at the nest box area and thought that would help inside their house but when it gets that hot I guess it just blows very hot air. It just broke my heart.

All my chickens are like pets. They meet me at the gate of their pen when I go out to take care of them. Of course, they are expecting treats from the kitchen and they like to be petted too. My garbage disposal is hardly used anymore. Pat, Carthage, Missouri



200 Eggs a Year

Chicken Care Guide

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)



Dorothy : Gina: thanks for your newsletter. These pictures are of my husband, Marion, and our chickens begging for treats. Every morning, he lets them out into the larger run to play and scratch while he reads the newspaper (“Keeping them informed of the news,” he says.). The pictures show how the ladies search and beg for their treats, even pulling the container from inside his shirt.

We have 9 totally spoiled hens! They love treats of vegetables, fruits, nuts, and bread. Several allow us to pick them up; a couple will jump into our laps. Blessings, Dorothy



Danuta : Am sending a picture of how I solved the problem of too much California sun or rain on our girls, the awning keeps them & the coop nicely sheltered year-round & they love it!



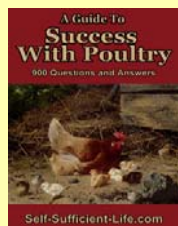
Cascade Heights : We raised chickens for 22 years on a small farm property (ten acres, 3 open & 7 wooded) in the Berkshire hills of Massachusetts. Started with two chicks and a tiny pen and in the process of building a beautiful barn to house a horse, added an 8 x12 coop on one side with fencing - the coop was large enough for a small entry way to keep the metal feed containers out of the weather with sliders into the coop. We eventually kept 40-50 birds with occasional meat birds and of course a few turkeys pre-Thanksgiving holidays. Fortunately for us there was a home business a few miles down to process the turkeys around the holidays - we of course slaughtered and processed the meat chickens ourselves.

Fast forward to 2008 when we found ourselves shocked in an unanticipated move to California - we sold the farm, the horse, divested ourselves of the chickens (and our now dim memories of shoveling snow constantly to care for them in winter, breaking ice on frozen water, etc.), closed our organic egg business and headed across the country with two dogs, a potted aloe and a cactus plant! After several months of hunting, we found a foreclosed property (CA is still too expensive to buy the "perfect home" even during the biggest real estate slump in recent history) and have been fixing it up since 2009. It is in the middle of Oakland, happily has a back yard and room for YES, you guessed it - city chickens! It took a while to find someone to put up a decent coop (pictured in process - it has nesting boxes and is completely roofed and enclosed to protect from varmints (racoons as large as pit bulls) and to keep the hens from wandering the neighborhood). We have six laying hens, 4 bantam hens and one bantie rooster (Fritz) who will remain until someone complains about the crowing - roosters not allowed here unfortunately. He's a cutie - Old English Gamebird bantam - the full size hens are Delawares and Jersey Giants. We hope

to sell 2 or 3 dozen eggs a week so the girls can pay for their feed - no more major egg business however! Neighbors are looking forward to the fresh eggs - and I'm hoping NOT to be tempted to add more birds to fill the demand! Having the coop is great - really gets us outside more on our property to have better use of the yard.



Glad to be able to join the subscribers of Keeping Chickens! Photos are of the coop finished without birds (yet) - in the photo, the chicken house is on the far left with feed storage in the waterproof barrel under a set of shelves. Here are the girls eating greens when they were a couple of months old - hatched 4/20/11.



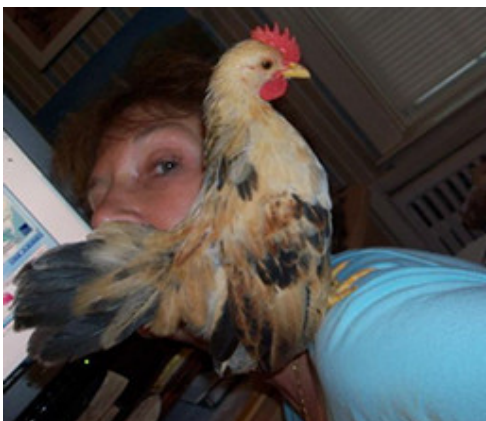
Success With Poultry

Practical Advice on Eggs, Feeding, Chicks,
Housing, Diseases, Incubators and Brooders,
Turkeys Ducks and Geese

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)



Lin : My chicken tractor, custom made by my Brother, Dave.. Also Rudy, my Serama.....Many thanks for your newsletter, Lin from Lancaster PA



Judy Whitley : Two Cats and a Chicken - Once upon a time we had a chicken that was setting some eggs. Two cats invaded her nest and gave birth to their kittens. It was a very crowded nest with two cats, two litters of kittens, a chicken and some eggs, so we gave the eggs to a different chicken. The chicken adopted the kittens and was quite frustrated that they would not jump out of the nest and follow her to water and scratch. The cats were happy-go-lucky and would leave the hen to babysit most of the time. One day the cats decided to move out. One by one they carried the babies to a new home. The chicken was frantically clucking after each 'theft' running after the cat and back to the nest to guard the rest of her brood. When the last kitten was gone she wandered around kind of lost, clucking pitifully. In just a few days the poor broken-hearted hen died.



It's been close to 30 years since we've had chickens, but this summer my husband cornered off the woodshed for a coop and we got 10 hens. What a joy they are! Four of them have names so far, Shorty, Snake, Chatterbox and Goldilocks. These are the ones who eat scratch out of my hand and Snake is the one that bites a bit too hard.

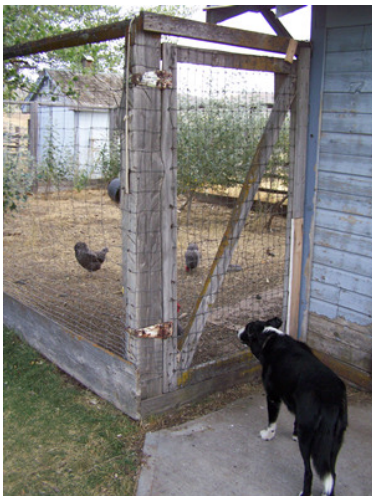




The coop is designed for "no poop on the shoe". Eggs are collected without going inside. They also have feed and water that can be serviced from outside. The trapdoor to close them off at night is operated by a rope and pulley from outside the run.



A thermo-cube and heat light will keep the water from freezing this winter. I've ordered a timer switch to extend the daylight hours. We insulated the floor, ceiling and walls. We placed stock trailer mat material on the floor so it is easy to shovel out. My neighbor supplies wood shavings for the nests and floor.



The cowdog, Foxy, is my little "chicken tender". She is vitally interested in every part of their care. However, I'm glad the chickens are safe behind the fence because I doubt if she and the other two stock dogs can be trusted.



GM : We are so proud of our first six chicks. Three are still hiding under Mama in the pictures. My husband dumped Mama's first clutch, telling me he thought the eggs were "rotten". He is not a country boy! She went right back to work, laid a new clutch, and I told him, "Don't you dare disturb her again." A few weeks later, the little ones began to peek out from under her. She was very protective. I guess she learned that lesson the first time. Mama is so smart. Although we have constructed hiding places for them, she takes them to the area of the fenced-in yard where bushes and small trees protect them from hawks. There she teaches "Scratching 101" and "Bug Pecking 102" and "Come Hide When I Say So 103". They are adorable, and one or two are big enough to jump onto the roost pole at night now. Winter is coming , so we put up the infrared lamp the other night when it dropped to frost levels. Proud Molkenhins of Indiana



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
[Click Here To Learn More](#)