

Keeping Chickens Newsletter

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www.KeepingChickensNewsletter.com



March 2015

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 : I wrote back a few months ago concerning a couple of my hens laying soft shell eggs. I went the GNC store and bought Calcium capsules (the capsule was easy to open) and a bottle of Vitamin D. I poured in a capsule a day into their food. I also, put a full dropper of the Vitamin D in their water (1 gallon) waterer when I changed their water each day. It has taken two to three months, but I am getting hard shelled eggs again from these two hens. Just wanted to share this information. I love reading your newsletter. Thanks and have a great day! Sue Jones

Mary Hunter : This is for gentleman mention the freezing water issue. In the mid 70's I purchased galvanized water heaters for the 5 gallon galvanized chicken waterers. The heaters are still available. They are designed for use with water and are sealed. They lasted for the 6 years I raised chickens then. I kept them. When I started raising chickens again 4 years ago they went back to work keeping the hens water thawed. The heater is warm enough that you can feel it is warmer than the air but, I don't think it gets the water more than 45 degrees. Just enough the water doesn't freeze. This year I am using them with the 5 gallon plastic waterers and they work just as well with them. They are cheap today compared to what I paid then, \$35 in 1975. I've seen them at about \$75-\$80 recently. Well worth it as there is no risk of fire from things going wrong as can happen with a heating pad. Because they don't heat the water much the cost of operation is small.

Our Grange is teaching a class on "Raising Chickens" taking someone new to chicken raising to butcher age or with pullets to point of lay. It looks like a fairly intense class covering, selection of breeds, where to get chicks, care of day old chicks, making your own brooder, roost, etc.

Thanks again for the new letter. I enjoy reading everyone's "Chicken Stories."

Steve : Wow !!!! What a great news letter you provide, and great feed back from all the other wonderful readers / chook keepers. Thank you all.

We moved from the UK 8 years ago to New Zealand and have been keeping our girls I think but don't quote me they are road island red bantams, maybe someone could confirm this, we got mum and six chicks but I put the week old male down as we are in a residential area at the moment on the South Island Christchurch.

Below are the girls



They have been spoilt rotten since getting the girls, the coop now has a 3rd nest box fitted and a new paint job from the 5 1/2 year old grandson lol, he just loves to go get the egg every day after school then put the date it was laid on the shell.



Made the feeder from soap powder bin, fitted two 90 degree pipes and flower pot waters to stop rain getting in grandson chose the colours. Then made and sorted the water nipple feeder and a fresh fruit holder



Main concrete pen area used to be a dog pen so netted and put dust area in, then secured the old back garden veg patch for them to roam around and scratch in.
Regards, Steve Dudley

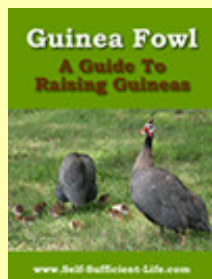


Jerry : Our chicken house is 8ft by 8ft. Attached to one side is a chicken pen that the back side and end are covered as well as the roof. The South side has a clear plastic greenhouse sheet to let the sun in. On the other side is a 30 X 50 ft plastic covered greenhouse we use as a cold frame and storage. In between the greenhouse and the chicken house is a 2 foot tunnel so the chickens can go into the big greenhouse to scratch and enjoy the sun. The waterers are heated dog bowls as the little bantam chickens can't get into the deep heated water bucket and sometimes the heat can't get to the top and it gets ice on it.

We take warmed buckets of water for the old 14 year old blind goose to dip in. I put a 100 watt light bulb under a trash can lid over one end of the roost and they take turns warming up. I leave the light on all the time for them. The feeder is always full and we add scratch grains AND, we buy a head of cabbage and a loaf of cheap bread once a week and they love the treats.



So far this winter, we always get 7 eggs a day up to 12 a day from 16 chickens every day. They haven't stopped laying one day yet. A farmer I have coffee with some mornings says his chickens quit laying. His 12 chickens are in a barn, on the ground, and he feeds them one coffee can of feed a day and they get their water most times from the snow. No heat, sometimes fresh water. And he hasn't gotten any eggs for months. Go figure.



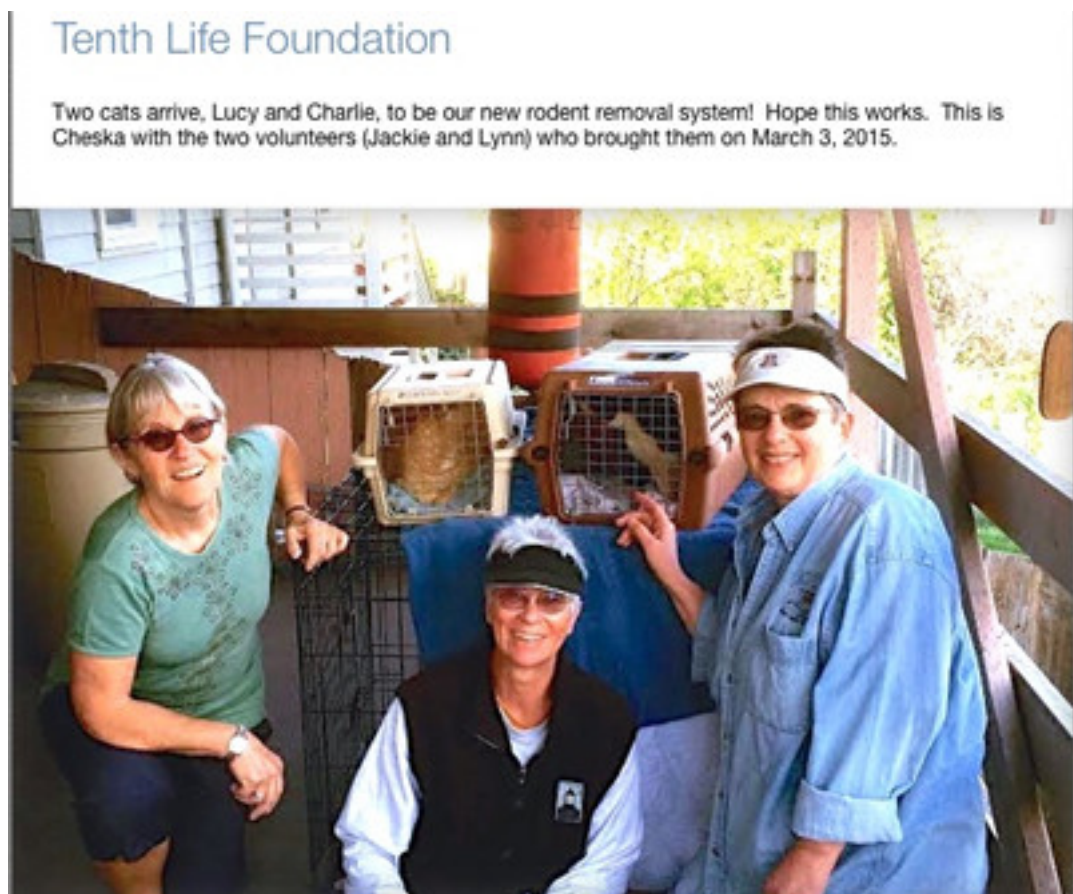
Guinea Fowl

A Guide To Raising Guineas

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)

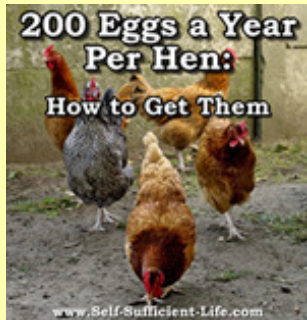
Francesca : I have another rat themed message! We have been fighting rats here in Oakland CA since we got our chicken coop up about 4 years ago. The only time we saw no rats was when we had to re-home our flock to go on an extended "retirement celebration" vacation last summer. We started up fresh again in September with a dozen 6 week old pullets, two rescued Silkies from a slaughterhouse, and a pair of Mille Fleur bantams. And no surprise, now we have at least that many rats.

We are handling the problem by picking up the feed before locking up the birds at night and that works fairly well - at least that removes temptation for the overnight rat patrol. Trapping and poisoning does not get rid of them so we have decided to try a couple of feral cats - there is a program here in CA called Tenth Life Foundation which places cats in outside homes/barns/yards as rodent hunters. These cats are deemed unacceptable for adoption by the local shelter (failing the personality test, or simply strays which are kind of wild and unlikely to be adopted) and this program thus far has placed over 500 cats with people like us who have a proper set up for them.



The two cats just arrived, and they will be acclimated to their new location in dog crates for 2-3 weeks in our yard until they get used to the place. They are already neutered and innoculated and there is no adoption fee. So we are saving two lives. After they get used to the place, we hope they will "give back" by

taking the lives of rats who have eaten pounds of feed and killed several young chicks over the years. Our agreement is to feed them and provide shelter. We have a perfect place to do that which is not accessible by dogs, ours or strays. I will keep you posted on how our feline "system" works for rodent control in and around our chicken coop.



200 Eggs a Year

Chicken Care Guide

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)

Mari : I thought you and your readers would enjoy seeing this deformed egg. It looks like an umbilical cord coming out of the apex of the egg! Pretty creepy! My hubby found it earlier this week. So I'm not sure if it was from one of my welsummers or Jersey Giants. But my guess is that it's from one of the welsummer girls. Mari Roberson



Christina : When I ran out of chick mash this fall, instead of buying the overpriced stuff with the antibiotics added to it, I put a 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 mixture of lay crumbles, scratch feed, and very cheap dog food through my industrial blender until it was fine enough for the chicks. The cheap dog food adds the extra needed protein, and if you look at the ingredients it is primarily corn anyway. Viola!, chick mash without the added antibiotics, and in keeping with my organic chickens.

One reader wrote about her pampered indoor chicken who had an overgrown beak. The reader inquired if making a sheet of sandpaper available would help the chicken. I'm quite sure it won't. I have a handicapped peeper who is now five months old. When I put his cohorts outside, in the process called "hardening", Peeper would never venture outside the large lighted brood box. The other chicks kept growing and no longer needed chick mash, but when I turned off the light bulb for good and stored away the brood box, Peeper was viciously attacked by his siblings and the adults. If I hadn't intervened, he would have been killed. I brought him back inside with the brood box and set him up in the bathtub of the guest bathroom.



Peeper has grown a bit of wattle, which makes me think it is a cockerel, but still can't walk normally and is now half the size of his siblings. Two of the pullets have started to lay eggs now, and the cockerels were delicious fried except for the loveliest, best balanced one that took his 7-year old sire's place last month when Jacques Clouseau's eggs all turned out to be infertile. (One reader mentioned her rooster seemed to "wobble", and this is what happened to Jacques last month when he finally failed to do his job. I do not know if this was old age or disease.

I had to put him in the pressure cooker for over thirty minutes, but he was very tasty, dark meat.)

Even though I remove the spur bud from the cockerel that is going to become the yard rooster, and Jacques had this done, you can see the vestigial spurs which had grown on his legs over the years.

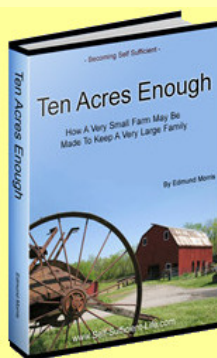


Anyway, back to Peeper; his bill had overgrown, so I just trimmed it the same way my Veterinarian dad had shown me to trim parrot's beaks. ~ *I have put Christina's full instructions for trimming a beak (complete with photos) here :* <http://www.keepingchickensnewsletter.com/site/how-to-trim-the-beak-of-a-chicken>



(after the trim)

Peeper has just finished brooding 3 black sex links that I wanted to add to my flock. Apparently, he is a dwarf; which I have encountered twice before in eight years of breeding this line of Buff Orpingtons. Although I kept his left hip taped up for the first three weeks after hatching and it healed, the tendons in his left knee joint never tightened up, and the joint is useless. He trills when I hold him and watch videos, and has learned not to poop when out of his cage, but I do not know what to do with him, as I do not need an indoor chicken for a pet. Time will tell. Thank you, Christina



Ten Acres Enough

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

A self-sufficiency classic, 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](#)

Carol : Dear Gina, I just want to thank whoever suggested feeding black sunflower seeds to stop feather plucking. My girls have constantly looked like ex-bats despite being with me since point of lay and a huge house and external run. Started them on the seeds a couple of months ago (coinciding with their moult) and all three now look GLORIOUS with fully feathered bums! Have kept chickens for 6 years now and it is the first time I have been able to be proud of them!!



Thank you whoever it was - those seeds are a wonder cure!!

Carol Burton, Hampshire, UK