

A close-up photograph of a fluffy yellow chick standing on a dark, textured surface. The chick is facing right, with its head slightly turned towards the viewer. Its feathers are soft and downy, and its beak is a pale pinkish-orange color.

Chick Care Guide


Getting Started • Different Breeds • Feeding & Watering
Digestive System • Healthcare • Living Quarters • Equipment



Getting Started

Raising chickens, other poultry and gamebirds can be a great experience. Some people raise them for the pure enjoyment of having them around in the backyard. Others raise them for the meat they produce or the eggs they lay—and sometimes for both.

Chick season starts in the spring, which is the time you need to get ready for your new birds. The Chick Care Guide from Nutrena offers important lessons in animal care and personal responsibility. In this booklet, you'll learn about the different types of poultry and how to feed and care for them from start to finish for optimum results.



The foundation for your project's success is built on special care and quality nutrition. And that's why we've designed our NatureWise® feeds to meet your birds' unique nutritional requirements every step of the way. For more information, be sure to ask your expert Nutrena® brand dealer or see us online at NutrenaWorld.com.

Have fun!

Birds of a Different Feather

Chickens

There are many different breeds of chickens that have been developed for different purposes. For simplicity, you can place them into three general categories: Laying, meat-producing and dual-purpose breeds.



White Leghorn

Laying Breeds: These breeds are known for their egg-laying capacity. They have smaller bodies and are not inclined to brood (wander off). Popular laying breeds include the White Leghorn, Red Sex Link and Black Sex Link breeds.

A healthy hen will lay eggs for a number of years. Hens begin to lay at approximately 20 weeks of age and will lay between 20-23 dozen eggs the first year. A young hen (pullet) will lay one egg every 3-4 days but, by 30 weeks of age, she'll lay two eggs every three days.

At 14 months, laying hens usually begin to molt, which is the process by which they drop their old feathers and grow new ones. During this period, no eggs are laid. After molting, hens will lay larger but fewer eggs per year (16-18 dozen).

Meat Breeds: Meat-producing breeds are very efficient converters of feed to meat. For every two pounds of feed they consume, they produce approximately one pound of bodyweight. A popular meat-producing



Barred Plymouth Rock

breed is the Cornish breed. The Cornish game hen is a cross between the Cornish and the New Hampshire or Plymouth Rock breeds.

Meat-producing chickens are broad breasted and larger than the laying breeds. They grow and feather rapidly and will weigh five pounds or more at eight weeks. Broilers and fryers are butchered at 3-1/2 to 5 pounds, while a roaster is butchered at 6 to 8 pounds.



Rhode Island Red

Dual-Purpose Breeds: These breeds are fairly large bodied breeds and are very hardy and self-reliant. The dual-purpose breed is the classic backyard chicken. Most lay large brown-shelled eggs. Good examples include Rhode Island Red and New Hampshire breeds. Many have the instinct to brood (wander off).

Gamebirds and Other Poultry

Gamebirds and other poultry are often raised for sport, pleasure or their egg/meat-producing qualities. Typical gamebirds include pheasants, quail and chukar. A variety of domestic ducks, geese and turkeys also make terrific projects or outdoor pets. Your local Nutrena® dealer and extension agent are excellent resources for more information on breeds and species.



Chinese Ring-Necked Pheasant

Feeding and Watering

Proper nutrition and water are two of the most important factors when raising poultry. Water is even more important than feed for chicks their first day. Never let them run out of water. To start, we recommend adding vitamins and electrolytes to their water. A water temperature of 50-55°F is ideal for chicks. Keep it warm during winter and cool in the summer.

Use the NatureWise® Product and Feeding Guide on Page 5 to develop a feeding program for your birds. All NatureWise® poultry feeds are complete feeds and do not require supplementation. Be sure to follow the feeding directions and management tips on the NatureWise® feed tag.

Start chicks on a starter or starter/grower ration soon after they have taken their first drink. Starting on the third day (if desired), sprinkle baby chick grit on the feed daily as if you were salting the food. One chick will eat approximately 10 pounds of chick starter in its first 10 weeks. Feeders should be arranged like spokes of a wheel around the brooder. This prevents heat from being blocked from the chicks and makes the feeding troughs more available.

The following table offers a useful guide for providing adequate watering and feeder space for your chicks as they grow.

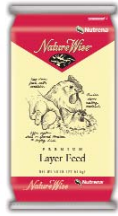
Bird Age	Feeder Space	Watering Space
0-3 weeks	1 inch per chick	1 gallon waterer per 50 chicks
3-6 weeks	2 inches per chick	1 gallon waterer per 20 chicks
6-20 weeks	3 inches per chick	1 gallon waterer per 10 chicks
Layer	4 inches per bird	1 gallon waterer per 10 birds

Use the NatureWise® Product and Feeding Guide on the next page as a general guide for feeding different types of poultry during the different stages of their life cycle. It is essential to provide your birds a complete feed product, as they are formulated and balanced to meet the energy and protein requirements for body maintenance, growth and reproduction.

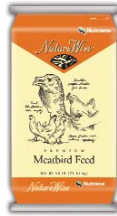
Scratch Grains as a sole ration will not meet the protein requirements for maintenance, growth and reproduction of growing chicks, laying hens or meat birds.



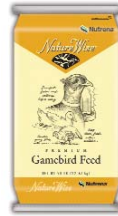
Chick Starter/Grower



Layer Feed



Meatbird Feed



Gamebird Feed

NatureWise® Product and Feeding Guide*

	Chick Starter	Chick Grower	Layer Feed	Meatbird Feed	Gamebird Starter	Gamebird Grower
Layers						
0 - 6 Weeks	•					
7 - 21 Weeks		•	•			
Onset of Lay			•			
Broilers						
1 Day to 4 Weeks	•			•		
1 Day to Finish				•		
Turkeys						
0-8 Weeks					•	
9 Weeks to Finish					•	•
Ducks & Geese						
0 - 4 Weeks				•		•
5 Weeks to Finish				•		•
Pheasants						
0 - 6 Weeks					•	
7 Weeks to Finish						•
Onset of Lay						•
Smaller Gamebirds						
0 - 6 Weeks					•	
7 Weeks to Finish				•		
Onset of Lay				•		

* Because NatureWise® feeds are made regionally, be sure to check with your Nutrena® brand dealer for specific product recommendations in your area.

Living Quarters

Housing for chickens varies depending on the number of birds and your purpose. The key in every case is to provide a suitable environment for protection, comfort and good health.

The most critical period of all is when your chicks first arrive. Be sure your brooding area is prepared in advance of when your chicks arrive. Allow one square foot of floor space per chick. It should be well ventilated, kept warm and free of drafts, and protected from cold, wind and rain.



The brooder provides warmth and protection to keep chicks comfortable during the first six weeks. Clean and disinfect the brooding area at least two days before chicks arrive. After the area has dried, cover the floor with 4-6 inches of dry litter material. Pinewood shavings or sawdust is recommended to aid in disease prevention. Hardwood litter is not recommended. Set and adjust the brooder 4-6 hours in advance. Use an 18-inch cardboard or wire mesh guard ring around the brooder to keep chicks near the heat and close to their feed and water.

One 250-watt heat lamp should be used for every 50 chicks and should be hung approximately 20 inches from the ground in a corner or on the side of the area. Start with the temperature at 90-95°F the first few days and decrease temperature by about 5°F each week to a minimum of 65°F. Adjust the temperature by raising or lowering the heat lamp. Use two heat lamps in case one burns out.

Baby chicks huddle together when they're cold, which can cause smothering or suffocation, so check chicks regularly to be sure they are comfortable.

Keeping Your Birds Healthy

Starting out with healthy chicks goes a long way toward keeping them that way. To keep your birds healthy you'll need to avoid and recognize the signs of disease—and minimize parasites.

Coccidiosis is the most common disease in young, unmedicated flocks. This disease is characterized by diarrhea, unthriftiness and some mortality. It's transmitted by hens eating coccidia oocysts from contaminated droppings. A good coccidiostat, such as in select NatureWise® feeds, is designed to prevent outbreaks in young birds while allowing birds to develop a natural immunity. If an outbreak occurs in laying hens, treatment is normally given through the water.

Other diseases include aspergillosis, infectious bronchitis, Newcastle disease, Marek's disease, fowl pox, epidemic tremors, Gumboro, necrotic enteritis, fatty liver syndrome and blackhead. Many of these can be prevented by vaccination at the hatchery. For more information about poultry diseases and their prevention, contact your local veterinarian.

Also watch for external and internal parasites such as intestinal roundworms, cecal worms, mites, ticks and lice. Internal parasites are controlled with compounds like piperazine for intestinal roundworms, phenothiazine for cecal worms and hygromycin for capillary worms. To aid prevention, follow a rigid sanitation program.

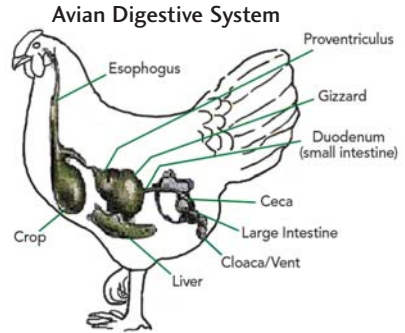
Ventilate areas properly to reduce stress from heat and disease. Adequate air circulation is necessary to reduce moisture and disease organisms. Remove all caked or wet litter as soon as it forms to keep the house clean and dry.

Be sure to ask your Nutrena® brand dealer to help you select the right NatureWise® feed for a healthy, well-balanced diet.

Knowing Your Bird Inside and Out

Chickens don't have lips—they have beaks. They also have one of the most efficient digestive systems in the animal kingdom. Very little of the food they eat goes to waste. Here's a quick lesson in anatomy:

- **Mouth:** It all starts here.
- **Esophagus (Gullet):** Transports food from the mouth to the stomach.
- **Crop:** A pouch in the esophagus used to store food temporarily before moving it on to the stomach.
- **Stomach (Proventriculus/Gizzard):** Principally the organ where food is broken into smaller units. It has two parts: the proventriculus for storage and the gizzard. The gizzard is a muscular part of the stomach that uses grit to grind grains and fiber into smaller particles.
- **Small Intestine:** Aids in digestion and nutrient absorption. Comprised of the duodenum, jejunum and ileum.
- **Liver:** The largest glandular organ in the body. Aids in the metabolism of carbohydrates, fats and proteins.
- **Ceca:** Bacterial action in the ceca helps break down undigested food passing through the intestine. The ceca turns into the large intestine, which connects with the cloaca.
- **Large Intestine:** Functions primarily to absorb water, dry out indigestible foods and eliminate waste products.
- **Cloaca:** Where the digestive, urinary and reproductive systems meet.
- **Urinary System:** Consists of two kidneys and two ureters. The kidneys are located in the pelvic bones. They filter waste from the blood and pass it through the ureter to the outside via the cloaca/vent.
- **Vent:** The external opening of the cloaca that passes waste to the outside.



Project Checklist

- ✓ **Healthy Chicks:** Buy chicks from a reputable supplier. Starting healthy is the first step towards keeping them healthy.
- ✓ **Brooder (electric or gas):** Use one 250-watt heat lamp for every 50 chicks. Always use two lamps in case one burns out.
- ✓ **Brooder Guard:** Can be made of any stiff material to protect chicks from wind drafts and keep them near the brooder lamp for the first 7-10 days.
- ✓ **Litter (bedding material):** Dry and clean pinewood shavings, sawdust, straw, crushed corncobs or shredded paper. **NOT** hardwood shavings.
- ✓ **Feeders:** Smaller feeders for young chicks and larger feeders as chicks grow. See table on page 4 for feeder space.
- ✓ **Waterers:** Start chicks on small waterers and replace with larger waterers as chicks grow. See table on page 4 for watering space.
- ✓ **Fencing:** If chickens are allowed outdoors, be sure to include sturdy fencing to keep them confined and to keep predators, especially dogs, out.
- ✓ **Feed:** A complete balanced NatureWise® diet, designed for your type of poultry and its life stage, is essential to your success.

Daily Management Activities Checklist

- ✓ Feed Availability
- ✓ Clean, Fresh Water Availability
- ✓ Ventilation and Temperature Requirements
- ✓ House and Litter Conditions
- ✓ Flock Appearance and Health

NatureWise®



**Because you care.
A complete quality nutrition
program for poultry.**

The NatureWise® Poultry Nutrition Program offers a complete line of quality nutrition products to meet your poultry needs from start to finish. All NatureWise® feeds are regionally manufactured and specially designed to help you meet your birds' unique nutritional requirements every step of the way.

Every NatureWise® formula comes with the quality, consistency and freshness required for optimum nutrition. And that's important. Because you don't just raise poultry. You care for them.

For more information, be sure to ask your expert Nutrena® brand dealer or see us online at NutrenaWorld.com.

NutrenaWorld.com
1-800-367-4894