

**Chicken
Rescue
UK**



A Quick Start Guide
to Chicken Keeping



*A handy how-to on the basics
on keeping hens for beginners!*

WAIT...
WHO ARE YOU
GUYS?

Chicken
Rescue
UK



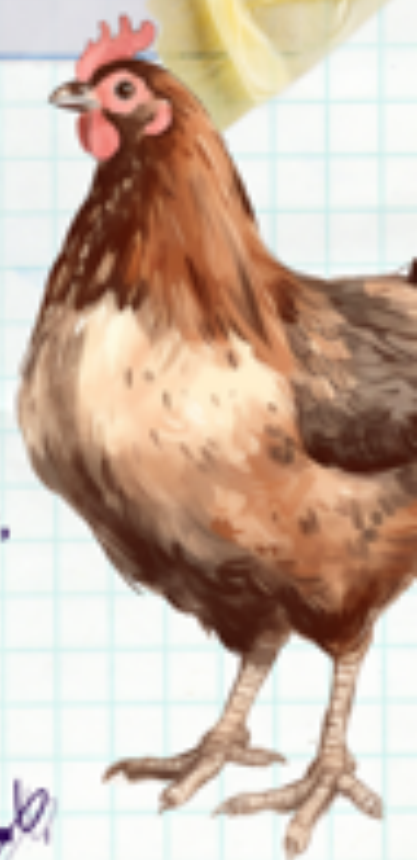
Chicken Rescue UK
is a not-for-profit Community Interest
Company started in March 2022 by a small
group of friends with the goal of creating a
welcome, kind community of all knowledge and skills in
chicken keeping. We all have one thing in common, and
that's our passion for rescuing ex-commercial hens and
rehoming them into loving and caring forever families
after retirement!

Our team have a variety of people
from all walks of life, from accountants, to mums and
dads, to graphic designers, and
nurses on board so everyone has a vast selection of
experiences and pieces of advice to offer!

With over 25,000 hens rescued
to date, our team have pieced
together this simple guide on
where to start on your new
chicken adventures.

Our team hopes to help with
additional tips and knowledge
from our collective experiences,
and will be sure to fill in on as
many details as possible. Have
fun, and keep clucking on!

Team CRM



I WANT TO ADOPT SOME CHICKENS!

HOW MANY SHOULD I START WITH?

We recommend that you keep a minimum of 3 hens as they are flock animals and need the company of several others to stay happy. Any less can end up with a lonely hen situation should one pass away, leading to depression and other health issues for the remaining girl.



WHAT EQUIPMENT IS RECOMMENDED TO START?

A coop is a good necessity to begin with. Coops are available to purchase in both wood and plastic, with wood being cheaper to purchase but require more upkeep to prevent pests, weathering and cleaning. Plastic, on the other hand, while being generally more expensive, are easier to keep clean and free of unwanted critters. You can find these online new and second hand, however we recommend if purchasing used then to examine the item in person first if possible.

Good things to remember in addition when purchasing is;

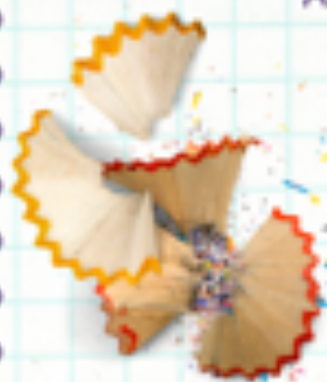
How easy is it to keep the coop clean and maintained?

Will you be wanting to build more perches inside?

Which bedding are you going to use in the nesting areas?

Are you going to use an automatic door or open and close manually?

How are you going to collect eggs?



WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER IN A RUN?

While many people enjoy the idea of free ranging their hens, it is always a good idea to have a backup in the form of a secure run in which they can still live their life to their full wellbeing capabilities. Foxes, and other wildlife will look at a chicken as an easy meal, so by ensuring a safe area for your hens to roam in, you won't be forced to worry about it as much as you would in a free range environment.

When building your run, it is important to use strong materials to deter predators as much as possible, and despite its name; chicken wire is easily broken through by a hungry animal. We recommend using either a galvanized weld mesh with small enough holes that your curious feathered family cannot poke their heads through and risk getting stuck, alongside an electric fence as well.

Another important reason as to why an enclosed run is useful to have is due to the regular outbreaks of Avian Influenza, also known as H5N1 or more commonly just as Bird Flu. To keep your hens safe from any active areas of the illness, it is recommended to cover your run in a fine mesh netting (i.e. scaffolding netting) to prevent any wild birds being able to access the area or your flock's food.

The virus is spread through an infected bird's feces, and can be so severe that if a flock is reported to have an active case in an area, any other flocks in an immediate radius must be culled to prevent further spread, even if showing no symptoms themselves. To keep up to date on any 'flockdowns' in your area and when to place your hens into their appropriately covered run until it is lifted, you can check the DEFRA website for regular updates.



Tarpaulin or plastic sheeting can be used to weatherproof your run, and woodchips will additionally help in keeping your ground area dry, clean and safe, with the added bonus of your hens will love to scratch and play in it!

Extra things to consider when making your run include:

- The space you can offer your hens, with a minimum of 2 sq/m per hen of free roaming space.
- Chickens like to nibble on grass and other greens so will you want an area safe from that possibility?
- The height of your fencing - we recommend a minimum height of 5ft as chickens love to jump over anything in order to live out their adventurous dreams!
- Maintaining the area in which they are to roam in - keeping it clear of any dangerous debris (i.e. broken and sharp plastic or glass, heavy items that can fall and crush, damaged or rusty items, anything with deep water such as water barrels, etc.)
- Keeping the area clear of small spaces in which a hen can get stuck.





WHAT SHOULD I FEED MY HENS?

As layers pellets or layers mash makes up a huge 95% of a chicken's diet, this is the best thing to give to your hens to keep them happy and healthy as all the nutrients for egg laying and more is supplied within these. Shopping around is always a good idea and your best bet in finding them is with a local farm supply shop.

To limit any unwanted visitors to your hens flock, such as squirrels, mice and other rodents, a treacle feeder is best to offer to your new feathered friends for their mealtimes. Not only does it discourage extra 'dinner guests' to welcome themselves to a buffet, but it is also a great way to keep waste to a minimum and keeps as mess free as possible. Chickens are very messy eaters anyway, but this helps significantly. It's also a good idea to leave out additional calcium sources such as oyster shells, or grit mix as it also helps with their digestion.

There is nothing wrong with offering your chickens a few treats now and then, however it is essential that you use snacks that are not table scraps and do not come out of your kitchen. A healthy treat to give your hens include sunflower hearts, and a variety of dried fruit and seeds which can also be purchased from your local farm supply.

It is highly essential that your food is stored in a dry, airtight and secure container to maintain all of its delicious goodness!

OKAY, I'VE GOT THE FOOD, WHAT ABOUT WATER?

Water is as important to a hen as it is to any other animal, including humans, and they will easily drink far more than they will eat. It is vital to have a constant source of clean water available to your chickens, and although they will happily drink it from something as simple as a bowl, these often get dirty quickly and can harbor a variety of nasty bacteria after they've decided on a few foot baths first.

There's a large number of chicken drinkers available from pet and agricultural suppliers and also online. It is up to you as their owner to explore your options and to find something that is most suitable to your needs.



LET ME HENTERTAIN YOU!

Your chickens are surprisingly smart and will always be looking for new things to do and explore. While not every chicken is the same in their needs of entertainment, here are a few ideas for you to try, and maybe give you hours of entertainment in watching them!



Mirrors - chickens like to see themselves in a mirror and will naturally be curious about this odd looking creature looking back at them! Just make sure it is plastic and not glass to minimize risk of chipping or breakage.

Peck toys and feed netting - keeping a nice little stash of snacks a little height off the ground will encourage your hens to problem solve and to discover fun ways to reach a yummy reward. It is also very entertaining for you as an owner to discover how each bird jumps, and may offer you a few surprises as well!



Perches and climbing areas - a happy chicken is an adventurous chicken, and they will more often than not find different things to climb, clamber and crawl across to explore their surroundings. Different heights offers new vantage points and lots of new areas to play.

Dust baths - Your new flock will be crazy about having a good old 'splash' in a dust bath. This can be made with something like an old tyre with some sand, though it is more likely your cheeky chickens will end up finding and making their own using some loose soil somewhere you wouldn't have thought of. It is messy, chaotic, but also a vital part of keeping themselves 'clean' and is also a huge amount of fun!



These are just a small handful of things we can suggest, however there really is almost no limit to the imagination and can be explored as much as you would like.



The important things to remember when it comes to creating entertainment for your hens is to make sure it is safe. Your new fluffy friends rely on you as their owners to keep them happy and healthy after all!



THE CLUCK-TOR WILL SEE YOU NOW...

Chickens, much like humans, do sometimes get a little poorly and sometimes get into bumps and scrapes as they enjoy their new lives with you. While we can't give out medical advice, we can offer some basic guidance on what to do for your hens to keep them as healthy as they can be!

SHOULD I CLIP MY HEN'S WINGS?

This is a very frequent question amongst new hen owners worried about their new feathery friends escaping their enclosures, and the very simple answer from us 'no'! People tend to think clipping a hen's wings will prevent them from flying over any fences, whereas in fact these clever creatures are actually able to jump incredible heights instead. More often than not, owners will still find their little explorers are managing to find their way out even after a clip.

Additionally, clipping a hen's wings bring forward a variety of issues for the bird, including pain and extreme discomfort if done incorrectly. A good example to compare it to in a human is if a nail is cut or torn too short... Ouch!

CAN I MAKE A HEN FIRST AID KIT?

Yes, you can, and it doesn't take a lot to do so! You don't need to break the bank in order to start, and these things can often help tide your hen over until a vet visit can be done if needed.

- Gloves
- Purple/Wound Spray
- Mite/Lice Treatment
- Antiseptic cream/spray
- Clean towels/Puppy Pads /Newspapers
- Medium Cat Carrier or Small Dog Crate for any poorlies, with suitable feeders/drinkers



WHAT DO EACH OF THESE THINGS DO?

GLOVES

Gloves are for you to keep your hands clean when handling a hen, and keep germs from transferring between your skin and whatever you may come into contact with. Medical grade gloves are often inexpensive and ideal for most situations.



PURPLE WOUND SPRAY

Sometimes your hens will get an injury and it can look awful. Not only does this spray help keep any curious flockmates from having a nibble with its deep purple colour, but it's an antibacterial spray as well! Just a small amount will help your hen on the road to recovery quicker. Be careful not to get it into any sensitive areas such as the mouth, nose or eyes, and it's a good idea to wear something to protect your own skin and clothes as it's difficult to remove! This can be found online and a great one is the Nettex Wound Spray.



ANTI-MITE & LICE SPRAY

Every so often you may find your girls with some unwelcome critters helping themselves to a tasty meal, but don't panic! Keeping yourself supplied with some anti-mite spray will help keep these creepy crawlies off of your flock, with the additional help of diatomaceous earth scattered into a dust bath. You only need a couple of sprays under each wing, around the vent and on the neck and you'll soon see your hen improve in no time!

One of our recommended products is Johnson's Anti-Mite Extra Spray, though there are plenty available to purchase!



ANTISEPTIC CREAM / SPRAY

Keeping an antiseptic cream or spray inside your first aid kit is always a valuable item to have for helping clean out any open wounds after a wash. While it doesn't deter anything from being interested in an open wound, it will help with the healing as well.



CLEAN TOWELS / PUPPY PADS / NEWSPAPERS

Sometimes you may need to separate a hen for some additional TLC, and the idea of hay or sawdust may not be the best option to keep their space clean during that time. Old towels can be cleaned and reused, while puppy pads are very absorbent but a little more pricy. Newspapers are often the best item to use as they are absorbent, can be torn into bedding and many people are willing to donate old ones to help an animal in need!

MEDIUM CAT CARRIER OR SMALL DOG CRATE

Having a small space to keep a hen in should she become poorly or hurt is often an important step to help get her on the road to recovery, or simply to prevent anything else amongst your flock. These can also easily be made dark and warm to help soothe the hen inside, and can also help you monitor how much your hen is eating and drinking with suitable drinkers and feeders.



Of course, our many volunteers within Chicken Rescue UK are always available to ask for advice, so don't hesitate to get in touch if you're unsure!

THANK YOU
FOR
READING!



We hope after reading this guide you will be feeling more confident in starting your new chicken journey.

All of us here from Chicken Rescue UK are sure you will have plenty of fun, laughter and good memories amongst your flock!

Team CRM



This guide has been lovingly made by the team at

Chicken
Rescue
UK



www.chickenrescue.co.uk

