



Chicken Keeping Course

Charlotte's Chickens

Suppliers of Hybrid Chickens & Accessories

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Why keep chickens?

Keeping hybrid chickens at home or on an allotment is one of the fastest growing hobbies. Nothing is better than collecting free range eggs freshly laid by your own hybrid chickens, from your own back garden or allotment and then serving the eggs up to your family for breakfast/lunch/dinner.

Which Coop to buy

It doesn't matter whether you want just two or 22 chickens, you need to find a suitable chicken coop and run that's appropriate for them and for the space you have available.



The size of your chicken house will depend on the number of hens you intend keeping. To keep four chickens you need a minimum internal space of 4 x 4ft, but the more outside space, the better. A 10 x 10ft plot is plenty, but a smaller run will do provided you can regularly move the hens on to clean grass.

Make sure you buy a good quality chicken coop otherwise foxes will get in! Foxes are of course the main predator of chicken, and they're widespread in both rural and city areas. You don't want to invest in choosing and buying your hens only for your chicken coop to let you down when a fox comes calling. Wooden houses cost from about £100 upwards, but for something well built, and with an integral run, you will have to spend at least £250. You might decide to build your own henhouse and run. This is a good option if you want to keep costs down.

But this needn't mean spending a fortune. A 6 x 4ft shed from any DIY store makes a nice hen-house you can stand up in and is large enough for six chickens. Then you just need to add perch bars, an external nest box and a small doorway.

The coop shouldn't be in a place which is too hot, or damp or too cold, as exposure to such extreme conditions can seriously affect their health. This is why the design of the chicken coop needs to be so that they are protected from extreme weather conditions. Keep these features in mind when you are planning the chicken coop or better yet, buy a flat pack chicken coop and make small amendments to suit your particular needs.



Within your coop you should have nesting boxes, normally; you have one nesting box per every four birds. The size of the nesting box really isn't as important as many would think. You want to make your life as simple as possible and having a box that is easy to clean will simply cut down on the time taken cleaning out the Chickens.

Why choose Hybrid Hens

Hybrid chickens have been bred for their hardiness, high egg production and temperament. The Hybrids from Charlottes Chickens come fully vaccinated before they get to us (15 weeks). Most are friendly docile birds best suited to free ranging or back garden living and make excellent, low maintenance pets.

A couple of misunderstandings that may arise - you don't need a cockerel to get hens to produce eggs and the colour of the egg is not always related to the colour of the hen.

Essential Equipment & Supplies

You'll need a water drinker and a feeder, which are available in plastic or galvanised, roughly about 4/5 litre for the drinker and about 3+kg for the feeder should be perfect for 4 hens, both of which can be hung outside within the run area - this way it stops them pooping in their water and mice getting the food.

For bedding within the coop and nest boxes we tend to line the floor of the coop with newspaper and then a layer of wood shavings on top of that and just straw in the nest boxes. The birds will also require a perch for a place to sleep at night use 5cm thick timber with edges rounded and this needs to be placed within the coop approximately 50-60 cms above the ground in a level position and if you allow about 20 cms per bird for the length of the perch that should be fine.

Feeding and Healthcare

Feeding chickens is easy. They need fresh clean water to drink and "laying hen pellets" to feed. The basis of a chickens' diet is usually either pellets or layers' mash and most will accept either quite happily. We start the hens on mash when we they first arrive as that is what they have been reared on then slowly introduce pellets – just because we found mash messy and it is can be rather dusty however, layers mash takes longer to consume and so keeps the chickens occupied for longer – less likely to start pecking. Both Mash and Pellets are a fully balanced diet for optimum egg production, consistent shell quality, good yolk colour and excellent egg size. They also enjoy household leftovers (avoid meat), and they love weeds, grass cuttings and bugs from the garden.

You should always keep a ready supply of poultry grit down for your chickens. All chickens need grit in order to help mash up their food during digestion, helping them to get the most nutrition out of their mash or pellets. It also aids in the production of strong eggs thanks to the calcium content. If your chickens tend to lay soft-shelled eggs, you should definitely ensure that grit is part of their diet.

Bringing them home

Once the hens are home, settle them in. They'll probably have to be brought inside to perch for the first few days. Don't let them free-range until they know where home/bed is! Feeding chickens is easy. Eventually your chickens will take themselves off to roost as soon as it's dusk. And when they're in, they become really placid and calm and cuddle up with each other for the night.

Common problems and what to look out for

Pecking

Should hens perch or sleep in the nesting box

Introducing new birds to old

Soft Eggs

Egg Eating

Egg Bound

Mites and lice

Moult

Blocked/Impacted Crop

Sour Crop

Prolapse