

Chicken Keeping

Made Simple



CONNIE BOUCHER

CHICKENS

Well hello! I'm Connie, and I like chickens!

My fascination started when I was a little girl, but my story actually stems from my grandma's story, which began long before I was born.

My grandma grew up in Escalante, Utah, back when the only way in and out of the town was through a "hole in the rock." Now there's a road, but it's still a well-known spot. As you can imagine, the handful of families that lived there had to be self-reliant. I don't remember my grandma ever talking about having chickens, but I'm sure they did.

After she got married, my grandpa took a job managing a little ranch in Abraham—a deserted place in the middle of a bunch of dirt and sagebrush. My grandma was paid to feed the ranch hands, and given her background, she was able to grow and produce most of what she served without spending much money. That's when she started raising chickens, both to eat and to sell. It gave her a way to earn extra money during the Depression, when times were tight, and over the years, her small flock grew into a thriving business.

My grandma became known as "the chicken lady," and her eggs were said to be the best around.





Turns out most of my grandkids
really like chickens too. I love it!



If you ever need a garden bed or compost pile turned over, let your chickens do the work - they will get it done in no time!

DON'T NEED

The first winter I had chickens, I bought a chicken heater, lights, and all sorts of extras to keep them comfortable in the cold. Dragging cords out to plug everything in was a hassle, and the chickens managed to poop on the heater and tip it over. Then I read about a coop fire, which made me nervous, and when summer came, I had to figure out where to store all the unnecessary winter gear.

The next winter, I gave my chickens to a friend, and the following summer, I got rid of all the winterizing paraphernalia. The only thing I kept was a water heater, which stays out in the run and has turned out to be the only real necessity. I still use that every winter because, without it, the water freezes solid.

Since that first winter, I've never put a light or heater in my coop, and my chickens still lay plenty of eggs. I haven't noticed any difference at all.

I also bought cute little chicken toys and other things to entertain them, and that was a total waste of money. My chickens completely ignored them.



RUNS

You don't need a fancy run, but experience has taught me it serves to use the right poles and fencing, and build it right to start with.

A solid chicken run will protect your flock, make daily care easier, and keep your backyard clean. Investing in strong materials and good design upfront will save you time, money, and headaches in the long run. And once your run is built, your chickens will be safe, happy, and free to scratch, peck, and dust bathe—without tearing up your yard!

Here's what you need to know to build a solid, functional run that will last.

CHOOSE A STURDY FRAME MATERIAL

The frame is the backbone of your chicken run. It needs to be strong, durable, and weather-resistant.

- Best materials: Treated wood posts, metal poles, or PVC pipe (if reinforced).
- Avoid: Weak, untreated wood that can rot quickly or thin plastic that won't hold up over time.
- If using wood poles, set your corner posts at least 2 feet deep in concrete for added stability.





One day, this cutie looked at me
and said, If I were a chicken, I'd
want to be one of yours. ❤️



As you can see, the net strung over the top of my run gets bogged down when it snows. The good news is it bounces back after the snow melts. The leaves that fall off the tree are more annoying. But sometimes you just have to work with what you've got!

How I did

I have two coops—I started with an A-frame coop that my brother built, and later upgraded to a larger, better-designed coop that sits off the ground. The first coop was well-built, but the materials haven't held up over time, and at some point, it will need to be torn down and removed.

The second coop was built to fit the space I had, and considering what I had to work with, it's well done. This is the coop I'll be reviewing on a scale of 1-10.

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PROTECTION FROM PREDATORS

My coop is built on 2 1/2 foot high legs. It has a ramp that leads to an opening in the floor that can't be closed. Because of this, I need secure netting over the top of the run to prevent raccoons from getting in at night. So far, it's worked - I've never had a coop invasion. Still, I can't close off the opening during nighttime, so there is always a risk.


If I were starting over, I would build a coop with a door that automatically opens and closes.

- Reduces Feed Waste – Since sprouted grains are more digestible and appealing, chickens eat more of what's offered, minimizing waste.
- Supports Strong Eggshells and Healthy Yolks – The extra vitamins and minerals in sprouts contribute to stronger eggshells and richer yolks.
- Provides Variety and Enrichment – Offering sprouts adds texture and flavor variety to a chicken's diet, keeping them happy and stimulated.





We named this chick Rod Stewart and he was a looker, but we ended up giving him to a farmer because he was also an aggressive crower!



Setting Up the Brooder:

- Place the bin in a warm, out-of-the-way place.
- Set the seed heating mats under the bin floor to provide steady warmth.
- Spread about an inch of chicken bedding in the bottom of the bin.
- Place the bricks or pavers in the front corners—one for the feeder and one for the waterer. This keeps them stable and prevents spills.
- Fill the feeder and waterer and place them on the bricks.
- Securely attach the clamp-on light so it won't fall into the bin. Plug in the light and seed heaters.
- Gently place your chicks inside and cover the bin with the window screen. Drape a large towel over the top to help retain heat.

This setup provides consistent warmth while allowing the chicks room to move around. For the first week or two, they'll spend most of their time huddled together in the back corner, but as they grow, they'll start exploring more.

With this system in place, brooding chicks is simple, efficient, and stress-free!



How To Pick a Chick

When choosing chicks, it's important to consider breed temperament, egg-laying ability, and egg color to match your needs and preferences. Here's a guide to help you pick the right chicks for your flock!

FRIENDLY & DOCILE (GREAT FOR BEGINNERS & FAMILIES)

- Buff Orpingtons – Gentle, calm, and affectionate; great with kids.
- Silkies – Sweet, fluffy, and often enjoy being handled.
- Cochins – Large, feather-footed, and friendly.
- Brahmas – Gentle giants with a relaxed nature.
- Easter Eggers – Curious and friendly, known for their colorful eggs.

INDEPENDENT & ACTIVE (GOOD FOR FREE-RANGING)

- Leghorns – Highly active, intelligent, and great foragers.
- Hamburgs – Quick and alert; love to roam.
- Anconas – Excellent free-range birds, highly energetic.
- Speckled Sussex – Friendly but love to explore.



Warning - when you go into a feed store in spring, it is hard to leave without a box of chicks. Chicken math is a thing, yall!

MEDS

Hippocrates, the ancient Greek physician, said: “Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.”

This means that proper nutrition is the foundation of good health, and the right foods can prevent and heal many ailments, reducing the need for medicine.

I’ve long believed this and have taken the philosophy to heart, both for myself and my chickens. I firmly believe that an ounce of prevention is worth much more than a pound of cure.

That’s why I take proactive steps to protect my flock against common issues like worms and mites by giving them essential oils, colloidal silver, and apple cider vinegar to strengthen their immune systems. These are small, natural measures that make a big difference in their overall health and well-being.

Using essential oils in your flock’s care routine can help prevent common poultry issues, support their immune systems, and improve overall well-being.



SUPPORTS RESPIRATORY HEALTH

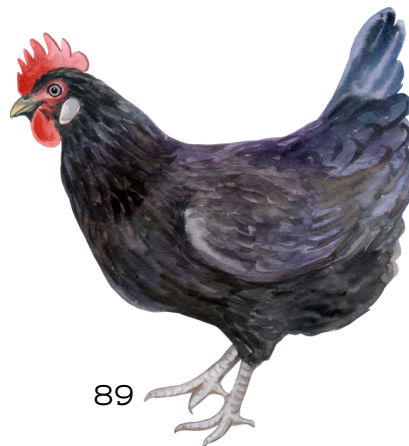
Chickens are prone to respiratory infections, especially in damp or poorly ventilated coops. Essential oils can help keep airways clear and reduce congestion.

- Eucalyptus – Opens up airways and prevents respiratory distress.
- Oregano – Helps prevent infections like CRD (Chronic Respiratory Disease).
- Lemon – A natural expectorant that supports breathing.

AIDS DIGESTION & PREVENTS WORMS

Some oils improve digestion, prevent gut infections, and help with parasite control.

- Oregano – Helps prevent intestinal parasites and bacterial infections.
- Cinnamon – Stimulates digestion and has anti-inflammatory benefits.
- Clove – A natural worm deterrent with antifungal properties.
- Ginger – Supports gut health and helps prevent crop issues.





Notice their glossy feathers and vibrant combs. Both are clear signs of super healthy chickens.



ENHANCES WEIGHT & CONDITION

This supplement is particularly useful for birds that need extra calories, such as winter layers or underweight chickens. It provides a safe source of energy without excessive weight gain.

HELPS REDUCE PECKING & AGGRESSION

Chickens that lack essential nutrients may resort to feather pecking and aggression. Adding Kickin' Chicken to their diet ensures they get the healthy fats and nutrients they need, reducing stress-related behaviors.

BOOSTS DIGESTIVE HEALTH

Healthy fats help with nutrient absorption, allowing chickens to get more out of their feed. This is particularly useful for flocks on natural or grain-based diets.

Kickin' Chicken is an easy, effective way to support feather health, egg production, and immune strength in chickens. Its high-quality fat content makes it a great supplement, and adding it to sprouting water couldn't be easier!!

Now you know what I do on a regular basis to keep my chickens healthy, and as a result, they are robust and thriving. They don't have nervous or behavioral issues, hardly lose feathers during molts, and they lay gorgeous eggs that are surely much more nutritious than most.



Moments with little grandkids are fleeting. Life marches on and you never know what lies ahead, so I'm enjoying these days while I can!

Connie
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