



Preparing for your Chickens

- Check your local zoning laws! In the city of Pittsburgh, you are allowed to keep chickens if your lot is at least 2,000 sq. ft.
- Many municipalities (including Pittsburgh) don't allow roosters, and it's a courtesy to any close neighbors. Offering eggs is always a nice gesture
- Depending on what age of chickens you get, you may need to prepare an indoor space for them until they can go out to their coop (see box below).
- Regardless, one of the most important factors in keeping chickens successfully is having a **safe and secure** place for them to live!

Creating a Safe Coop and Run

- Many predators will go after chickens or their eggs: snakes, raccoons, possums, hawks, dogs and more
- We don't recommend free-ranging chickens in an urban environment
 - Create a safe run with fencing so your chickens have ample space to be outside without danger from cars or predators
- There are many decent and affordable pre-made chicken coops available to order online or at hardware stores like the one pictured below
- Fencing should be small in diameter and reach all the way to the ground or below, as well as over top of the run.

Taking Care of Chicks

If you get mail order chicks, alert your post office so they can call you as soon as the chicks arrive. You will need: a box or tub with room for all the chicks, a heat lamp, pine shavings, small waterer, a small feeder, and feed formulated for chicks.

Transitioning to the Coop

Chicks should be at least 6 weeks old and outside temperatures should be over 50 F. A week before they go to their coop, gradually turn off heat lamps to acclimate them to cold. They are very vulnerable at this stage so it's best to shut them inside the coop until fully grown.



The Pecking Order: keeping your chicken coop friendly

- Chickens have a brutal social order and can have interpersonal conflicts that lead to injury or even death of the target chicken
- Keep an eye out for evidence of a chicken being picked on and isolate if needed (and especially if there is blood). Usually they can be reintroduced once they've fully healed
- Don't add single hens to a new flock and don't add new hens without a transition period where they can see each other but don't interact

Winter Chicken Care

- In our climate, the majority of chicken breeds do not need any supplemental heat
- There is more risk of starting a coop fire with heat lamps outside so we do NOT recommend their use
- You do need to keep their coop dry but ventilated and their water from freezing
 - Make sure their roof has adequate overhang to protect from sideways rain or snow as moisture inside can lead to frostbite
 - Consider purchasing a heated base for your waterer, or use a regular incandescent light bulb inside a cinder block.
- We tend to shut our chickens inside the coop when it drops below 10 F since to keep down cold drafts and because they are unlikely to go outside at those temps
- If you want eggs in the winter, you do need to provide supplemental light. Chickens need 14 hours of light to lay.
 - Put a daylight spectrum bulb on a timer inside the coop to get continued laying

Chickens make great composters!

- Chickens are omnivores and will eat just about anything
- We keep it to plant materials to avoid attracting rodents and other animals
- You can cut food purchasing by 40% by supplementing with garden waste
- A great way to use their manure is the **deep litter system**, where you add brown carbon-rich materials throughout the year to compost the poop
- Dig out the run at least once a year- after 5 turns and 180 days it can be safely used on food crops and provide a great nitrogen-rich soil amendment!



Further Resources:

- Books on Beginning Chicken- Keeping
 - Storey's Guide to Raising Chickens by Gail Damerow
 - Backyard Chickens: A Practical Handbook to Raising Chickens by Claire Woods
- USDA chicken keeping health resources:
https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/newsroom/news/sa_by_date/sa-2020/backyard-poultry-keeper-resources
- Where to buy baby chicks (spring only) and supplies:
 - Glenshaw Feed: 1645 Butler Plank Rd. Glenshaw, PA 15116 (412) 487-5559
 - Bakerstown Feed: 5820 Route 8, Bakerstown, PA 15007 (724) 443-7600
 - Freehling Farm for chicks and pullets (Facebook)
- Quality but affordable rat-proof chicken feeders: <http://ratproofchickenfeeder.com/>