

Backyard Chickens



Book Book Book!

Practical chicken-keeping

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From chick to chicken

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Life of a chicken

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World of chickens

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Wicked chickens

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Still life with chickens

Catherine Goldhammer B GOLD

Chicky chicky chook chook

Cathy MacLennan Pict. Book M

Shutting the chooks in

Libby Gleeson Pict. Book G

Max's chocolate chicken

Rosemary Wells Pict. Book W

The chickens in our program are a hybrid variety, but still some of the colours are really great. Once you start to investigate chickens, you will notice they really do have personalities.

Pure breeds of chickens display some of the most attractive plumage, so should you prefer to have pure breeds in your backyard, there are many to choose from. Perhaps you could take the time to visit a local Poultry Show or visit the Poultry Pavilion at your next Agricultural Show.

Pure bred or cross bred, the instincts of chickens are the same. They love to scratch in the dirt and forage for food. Apart from their diet base of pellets, which is very important to ensure they get their daily nutritional requirements, chickens love to eat grasses and grains, insects and pests. These are all found readily in your backyard. Chickens eat the pests and bugs which many people spray insecticides for and they also consider many of the plants we call weeds to be delicacies.

Fortunately for us, our chickens don't use the toilet. They leave their messages all through the backyard, and especially under the hen house where they sleep at night. You may think 'Yuk', but chicken manure is a fantastic fertilizer and is packaged and sold as such. Large amounts of chicken manure however will need to be composted before it is placed around plants, as the fertilizer value is too strong for most plants.

Chickens lay eggs almost every day until their natural moult cycle commences over summer. The eggs produced from your backyard do taste better. I don't care what anyone says, even if you can't actually taste the difference, just knowing they have come from happy hens will make them seem tastier! The yellow of the yolk depends upon the amount of green feed your chickens have access to. Yellow-yolked eggs normally indicate a higher level of vitamin B12. This vitamin is derived from the chickens eating greens. Therefore, your home grown eggs probably are more nutritious than commercially produced ones, which may have had additives and colouring agents included.

Chickens are gregarious animals, so they do enjoy company. It is therefore a good idea to have a couple of chickens in the backyard. Your group of chickens will create their own sense of community and will consider your backyard their home territory. Chickens are very territorial animals and will not normally wander far. Because of this, they will let you know of any intruders in their territory by creating a tremendous hubbub.