Backyard Chickens

Food and Water
- An egg is 65% water.
- Chickens should have access to clean, fresh water. Allow at least 1-2 cups of water per bird daily.
- Chickens should have access to plenty of food at all times. Allow at least 2 lbs. of food per week for each chicken. Chickens will typically eat more in the winter and less in the summer.
- Chickens are omnivores, which means that they eat both plants and animals.

Eggs
- A rooster is not needed for hens to lay eggs.
- One nest box can be shared by 4-5 hens. Hens lay eggs communally.
- Hens begin laying eggs on average at 20-24 weeks depending on breed and other factors such as daylight, weather conditions, and diet. Some breeds such as the Leghorn begin to lay earlier.
- Hens are most productive when they are under 3 years of age.
- Productive hens can lay 200-300 eggs per year. Examples of high laying hens are Leghorns, Black and Red Sex Link, Rhode Island Reds, Orpington, Plymouth Rock, Barred Rock and others.

Characteristics
- The body temperature of a mature hen is 105-107 degrees Fahrenheit.
- The average life expectancy of a pet chicken is 10-12 years, but they can live longer.
- Molting is a natural process that chickens go through to renew their feathers. Molting hens temporarily stop laying eggs and may benefit from an increase in dietary protein.

Terminology
- Pullet - Young female
- Hen – Mature female
- Cockerel - Young male
- Rooster – Mature male
- Straight Run – A term used when buying or selling chicks that means mixed pullets and cockerels.
- Broody – an instinctive condition in hens where the hen begins to sit on a clutch of eggs in order to incubate and hatch them.

Parts of Your Chicken’s Home
- Coop – A building where your chickens can sleep and get out of the cold. The coop provides shelter from the elements. Allow 4 square feet of space per bird.
- Roost – A branch, dowel, or 2X2 board that chickens use to perch at night. Normal chicken behavior is to sleep on a roost. Allow 8-10 inches of linear roosting space per bird.
- Nest Box – A nest box is used by chickens to lay eggs. A nest box should be 12”X12”X14” and contain hay and shavings suitable for nesting material.
- Run – A space used by chickens during the day. This space can be a fenced enclosure or an open space such as a backyard. Allow 8-10 square feet per bird. Ensure that birds have space for normal chicken behaviors such as scratching the earth and dust baths.

Web Resources
http://www.backyardchickens.com/
http://www.mypetchicken.com/

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