

RAISING CHICKENS

What You Need to Know

The Berrien County Health Department and Michigan State University Extension are partnering to make sure you have all the information you need before you buy a baby chick or a flock of chickens.

How to Care for Your Backyard Chickens



Local Laws and Regulations

- **Check if your city or township allows chickens.** Some areas require permits, limit flock size or prohibit roosters.

Proper Setup and Equipment

- **Create a proper setup for baby chicks**, including a brooder area with bedding, feed, water and a heat source.
- **Provide 3 square feet to 4 square feet per bird**, bedded nesting boxes in an area off the ground and roosting space.
- **Practice proper sanitation**, which includes clean, dry bedding and regular cleanup and disposal of bird droppings and used bedding.
- **Keep backyard flocks separate from wild birds**, and quarantine new birds from existing ones for 30 days.

Feeding and Watering

- **Purchase the appropriate chicken feed** to meet your chickens' nutritional requirements, provide access to clean, fresh water and use a drown-proof waterer for baby chicks.

Feeding and Watering

- **Ensure you have a safe, predator-proof coop.**
- **Secure your coop at night** and provide a safe outdoor space.

How to Prevent the Spread of Disease

Anyone caring for chickens should always use proper hygiene and sanitation.

- **Wash your hands thoroughly** before and after handling chickens or anything around the chickens.
- **Avoid kissing or snuggling with chickens** or touching your face or mouth.
- **Supervise children around chickens.**
- **Avoid eating or drinking around chickens**, their food or items in their environment.
- **Keep chickens out of your house.**
- **Never wear the same shoes in the chicken area and in your home.**

Bird flu is a viral infection that primarily affects birds but sometimes can spread to other animals and, in rare cases, humans. While most of the U.S. human cases are linked to individuals working on affected poultry and dairy operations, some are connected to backyard flocks, underscoring the importance of anyone raising chickens to maintain the health of their flocks.

Salmonella is a common bacterial disease that can cause diarrhea, vomiting, fever and/or abdominal cramps. Children younger than 5, older adults and those with weakened immune systems are at higher risk of illness from salmonella and other germs carried by chickens.



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