



CITY GIRL FARMING & *art*

What You Need



To Get
Started with
Chickens

10 MUST
HAVE
ESSENTIALS
FOR YOUR FIRST FLOCK

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READY TO BECOME A CHICKEN PARENT?

Chicken keeping is growing in popularity as so many people realize how easy (and even fun) having a backyard flock can be.

Maybe you're thinking about getting chickens, or maybe you're ready to take the plunge and start your own backyard flock. YAY for you!

Raising chickens is a super rewarding thing to do. It won't take long for you to discover that you'll get way than fresh, delicious backyard eggs! Every chicken has its own personality and quirks. They will have you laughing daily. You'll fall in love.

Let the egg-citing journey begin!

But first, let's make sure you have all that you need to start off on this new venture with success.



Below are the top 10 things you'll need to get started with chicks.

Much of the stuff on the list can be purchased at the feed store when you go pick up your chicks, although I find it easier to have their space all set up before I bring my chicks home so that they have a warm, cozy place all ready for them right away.

A BROODER

This is a temperature-controlled container or space to keep the chicks in before they're fully feathered out. (Until they have feathers, they're unable to regulate their body temperature, so you'll have to help them do it).

Ideas for brooders:

Big appliance box (ask a home improvement store to save one for you--it's free and a good size)

An extra-large dog crate

A big plastic tub (replacing the plastic lid with a secure wire lidded top and drilling lots of air holes so they have proper ventilation)



A corner of the shed or garage that you build out to contain the chicks and keep them safe from predators (like your family dog or even unaccompanied super excited toddlers)

As long as the brooder contains safe space, an ability to keep the space warm, and good ventilation, you should be good to go. So be creative. This doesn't have to take you a ton of time and money.

A HEAT SOURCE

You have a couple of options here: A heat Lamp or a Brooder Heating Plate.

This will be added to the brooder for temperature control. Your brand-new babies will need to be kept at around 95 degrees F.

If you're using a heat lamp, double and triple secure it. You don't want to have it fall and burn your brooder down (I've caught my brooder on fire before and I was being careful)!

Each week you'll be able to move the heat lamp up higher and cool down the temperature by about 5 degrees, so securing it in a way that is movable will help you later.



If using a brooder plate (a plate on adjustable legs that the chicks will huddle under to stay warm), you'll be adjusting the legs up weekly as your chicks grow.

(If you're super worried about catching your brooder on fire, a brooder plate is a much safer alternative and closer to what the chicks would do if they had a mama hen to huddle under).

A THERMOMETER

I always stick a thermometer in the brooder so I can see the temperature.

However, it's not absolutely necessary, if you don't have one or don't want to buy one. The chicks WILL tell you if the temperature is off.

If they're huddled under the light and not freely moving around the brooder, it's too cold. If they're spread out around the perimeter of the brooder, it's too hot. If they're happy, chirpy, running around, and having fun, you've got it perfect.

BEDDING

You'll need to line the bottom of the brooder with some sort of bedding. This will help with the mess (poo) and give the chicks something to sleep on. You'll want to change it regularly (at least once a week).

I use pine shavings in my brooder. Other options are straw (not hay), old rags, or those rubbery shelf liner mats that keep glasses from slipping.

You don't want to use newspaper (or anything similar) because it gets slippery and can cause problems with their legs. Nor cedar shavings because the scent is too strong.



FEED & WATER CONTAINERS

I generally use quart-sized water containers for chicks. They come in a plastic 2-piece set that you can unscrew and fill up. Or, they have a metal base option that fits on a regular mouth mason jar lid to turn it into a waterer.

I prefer to use the mason jar because it's heavier and harder for them to knock over (once they realize they can fly up and land on the top of the water container).



There are several varieties of feeders. You'll start with a smaller one and eventually graduate to larger ones when they move out to the coop.

Pick what you like, but keep in mind that the feeders designed to keep them from crawling into the feed are best. This way they won't spread as much feed all over the place when they eat (they instinctively will want to crawl into the feed and scratch it out of the feeder).

CHICK STARTER (& GRIT)

There are two kinds of chick starter you can get: medicated or non-medicated. The choice is yours and there are pros to either side. Here's a blog post I wrote about it to help you decide.

When you buy your chick starter, make sure to find out if you also need to buy grit (the folks at the feed store can help you). Some chick starter feed comes with the grit mixed in, some don't.

If you select chick starter without grit (which they need to help chew up the food and digest it—since they don't have teeth), you'll need another separate dish or container (even a tuna can if there are no sharp edges) to place in the brooder for grit. This way they can self-select it when they need to eat it.



PROBIOTICS

It's a good idea to add probiotics to the water for the first month or two. It comes in powdered form and it's easy to add to the water. It just gives them a little extra boost while they're babies.

Electrolytes are good to have on hand as well. I don't add these to the water all the time, but if one of them gets sick, it's good to have on hand (it's generally good to have on hand for your flock regardless of their age).

A CHICKEN COOP

When you bring home new babies, they'll stay in the brooder for 6-8 weeks, but once all their cute baby fluff is replaced by feathers, they'll be ready for a chicken coop.

Having a coop in place **before** you bring home chicks is a great idea. (I'm telling you this from personal experience--8 weeks flies by very quickly!)

A chicken coop is made up of several parts. There is the building itself that is the coop. Inside the coop, there are nest boxes (for egg-laying) and roosting poles (where they will sleep at night).

Connected to the coop is a chicken run. This is an enclosed space where the chickens will hang out during the day (unless you let them 'free range' in the yard).

The size of coop you'll need depends on how many chickens you'll have. You can find the minimum size calculations based on the size of your flock [here](#).

There are lots of options for coops--how they look, what they're made of, etc. I built my first coop (pictured here) from a reclaimed 2 story play structure and mostly recycled wood.

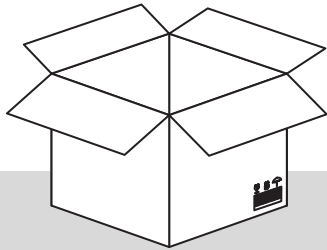
At one time I also had an extra-large dog house converted to a coop.



While the coop will be an investment, it will last for years and give your 'girls' a warm, safe place to live.



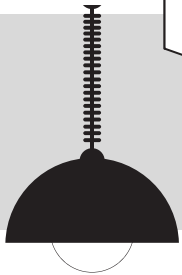
Must Have CHICK SUPPLY LIST



1

BROODER:

Appliance Box
Extra Large Dog Crate
Big Tub (with holes drilled)



2

HEAT:

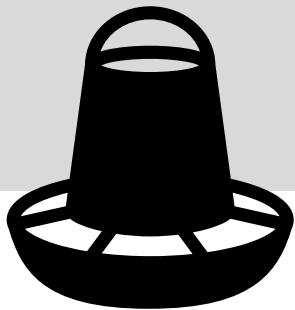
Heat Lamp
OR
Brooder Heat Plate



3

THERMOMETER:

Optional but handy!



4

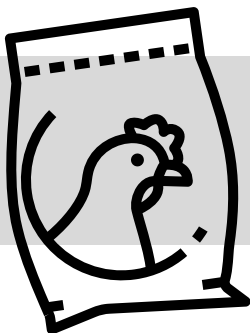
BEDDING:

Pine Shavings, Rags,
Rubber Shelf Liners. Etc
NO Cedar or Newspaper

5+6

CONTAINERS:

One for feed
One for water
Possibly one for grit



7

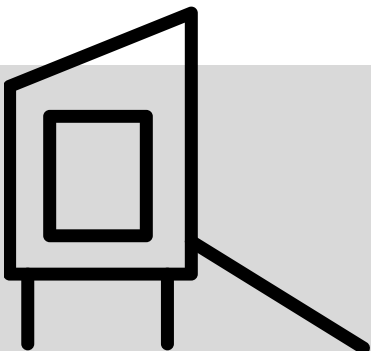
FOOD:

Chick Starter Feed
(medicated or not)
Possibly grit

8+9

NUTRITION:

Powdered probiotics to add to
waterer + electrolytes as needed



10

CHICKEN COOP:

Within 6-8 weeks the chicks
will be ready for an outside
home of their own. Make a
plan EARLY so you're prepared
when they're ready.

FOR MORE GREAT INFORMATION ON RAISING CHICKENS VISIT:

WWW.CITYGIRLFARMING.COM



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Raising chickens is so much fun! Don't worry that you don't know everything at once. You'll learn as you go along. Before you know it, you'll be a pro.

I'd like to invite you to use the **City Girl Farming Website** for a chicken resource. You'll find over 12 years worth of blog posts and content there to help you out on your chicken journey.

Also, please come join the online community:



Spreading happiness one backyard flock at a time,



Kerrie

Kerrie Hubbard:
Chicken Whisperer.
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