



THE CHICKEN LAND STARTER GUIDE

From Readiness to Routine



A streamlined, no-fluff
playbook built on trial,
error, and a lot of
clucks (and lessons
learned) to help new
Chicken Families dodge
the drama and raise
happy, healthy flocks
with confidence



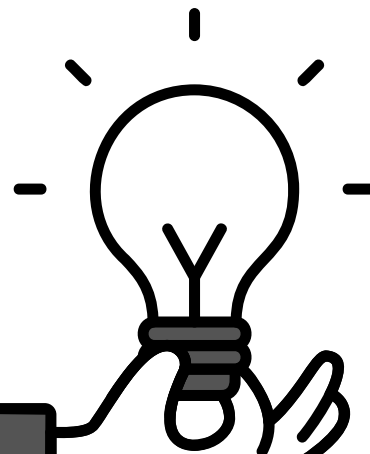


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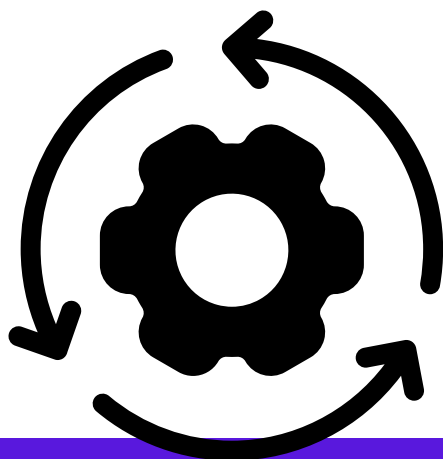
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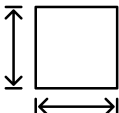




CHICKEN READINESS DECISION MATRIX

Overview (How it works):

Chicken ownership is deconstructed to the 5 main requirement categories: **Space, Time, Budget, Environment,** and **Mindset**. For each question below, provide a score - **1** = Not ready; **3** = Manageable with support or learning; **5** = Fully prepared.

Chicken-Tending Requirements	SCORE
 SPACE: Do you have at least 4 sq ft per chicken in the coop and 10 sq ft in the run? Are chickens allowed by city ordinance/ HOA?	
 TIME: Can you dedicate 15-30 minutes daily and 2-3 hours weekly for cleaning, feeding, and maintenance?	
 BUDGET: Can you afford setup (~\$100-\$700 DIY, \$1000+ store-bought) and feed (~\$15-\$30/mo)?	
 CLIMATE: Do you have shelter from cold/wind, shade for heat, and a predator-safe setup?	
 MINDSET: Are you ready for noise, mess, seasonal egg pauses, and occasional loss?	
TOTAL SCORE	

Total Score determines (relative) readiness: **5-10: Not Yet Ready** (Research & Observe); **11-17: Getting There** (Plan & Prepare); **18-25: Coop-Ready** (Start Your Flock!)



CHICKEN TENDING 101

INTRODUCTION

Once you've worked through the **Chicken Readiness Decision Matrix**, you've already done the hardest part — honestly assessing whether chickens fit your space, time, budget, environment, and mindset. If your score says you're ready (or almost ready), the next step is making a few key decisions that set you up for success before the first peep ever hits your house.

FLOCK SIZE

Decide how many chickens you actually want to care for before choosing breeds or shopping for supplies.

Things to consider:

- Most beginners do best starting with 3–6 chicks or pullets (fewer than 3 is not recommended)
 - Chicks (1-3 days to 6 weeks old) are cheaper, require a brooder, heat plate/lamp, and monitoring.; they require 5–6 months of care until eggs are produced
 - Pullets (teenagers from 6 - 18 weeks old) are more expensive, less fragile, and provide eggs sooner
- More chickens = more feed, more cleaning, more noise, more eggs, and more personalities sharing space

Chicken Mom Lesson Learned: Egg production increases quickly, but so does responsibility. A smaller flock is easier to manage, learn from, and expand later.

CHICKEN AREA AND SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Decide where your birds will live at every stage before bringing chickens home (not just once they're laying eggs). Chickens grow quickly, and planning *only* for adult hens is one of the most common beginner mistakes. Your setup should account for three distinct spaces: the **brooder**, the **coop**, and the **run**.

BROODER	COOP	RUN
Week 0-6 If starting with chicks, you'll need a safe indoor (garage) brooder.  Enough space to prevent crowding: ½ sf per new chick - 1½ sf per 4 wk old  A consistent heat source  Dry bedding & easy daily access  Protection from drafts, pets, and children Lesson Learned: Plan for more space than you think you need.	Week 6+ (Fully Feathered) The coop is your chickens' secure shelter.  Minimum 4 sq ft per chicken inside  Good ventilation without drafts  Roosting bars, nesting boxes, and clean-out access  Can withstand winter cold & summer heat Lesson Learned: Proactively plan for temperature extremes - insulation helps!	Week 6+ (Fully Feathered) Chickens need room to move and forage.  Minimum 10 sq ft per chicken  Fully enclosed & predator-proof  Shade, drainage, and shelter from wind Lesson Learned: Decide early whether your birds will stay in a run, use a movable tractor, or free-range (with frequent and regular) supervision.

TEMPERATURE OVERVIEW

Newly hatched chicks need supplemental heat because they can't regulate their own body temperature until they grow insulating feathers.

Temperatures for chicks should follow the cadence below:

WEEK 1 ~ 95°F	WEEK 2 ~ 90°F	WEEK 3 ~ 85°F
WEEK 4 ~ 80°F	WEEK 5 ~ 75°F	WEEK 6 ~ 70°F

FOOD & WATERING SYSTEMS

It's easier to make the decisions regarding long-term food and water access and distribution methods prior to bringing home chicks or chickens.

- Feeder type (gravity, treadle, DIY)
- Water system (manual refill, heated base for winter)
- Feed storage (sealed, rodent-proof containers)

This is where the **Weekly Care Tracker** becomes essential — it turns feeding and watering into habit instead of guesswork. Pick a system that works with your family patterns.

BEDDING, CLEANING, & WASTE MANAGEMENT

Chickens create waste daily (really, hourly). Decide how you'll manage it before it piles up.

Key choices:

- Bedding type (pine shavings, straw, sand)
- Cleaning rhythm (spot clean vs. deep clean)
- Where used bedding will go (trash, compost, garden)

Chicken Mom Lesson Learned: A clean coop smells like fluff and sunshine. A neglected one smells like terrible regret.

TIMING

When you bring chickens home affects everything. Consider planned vacations, school (or work or sports or other) obligations, weather extremes, and your own seasonal energy levels. Chicken-tending doesn't have to be complicated, but it does require intention, energy, consistency, and care.

Best beginner timing:

- Spring → **easiest** - temperatures are easier to track and control
- Fall → **manageable** - with planning
- Winter → **advanced** mode - ambitious

MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

Before getting chicks or chickens, set realistic expectations:

- Egg production fluctuates based on natural light durations - egg production drops during the winter for some chicken breeds
- Chickens can get sick and tough decisions will have to be made - see also, 'Roosters aren't allowed within most city-limits'
- Predators - and life - happen and some things are out of your control.

What you *do* get: conveniently 'free' compost, pest control, grounded routine, and a direct connection to food supply.

This is why **Mindset** is a category in the Decision Matrix — it matters just as much as space and money.

Chicken Mom Lesson Learned: Chickens are the closest living descendent of dinosaurs that are extinct - survival instincts are questionable.



CHICKEN TENDING 101

WEEK 1

Welcome to **Chicken Life!** This guide covers the essentials for getting started: proper space, daily and weekly routines, feeding and watering basics, climate considerations, and the right mindset for tending a new(ish) living system.

You'll also find a **Weekly Care Chart** that breaks chicken tending into clear, manageable steps, helping you build confidence as you care for your flock from day one.

TRANSPORTING CHICKENS TO THEIR NEW HOME

Chickens don't need fancy carriers, but they do need security and warmth.

For chicks:

- Use a small box or pet carrier with air holes
- Line with paper towels or bedding
- Keep chicks warm (but not overheated) during transport

For pullets:

- Use a secure crate or carrier
- Keep them shaded and calm
- Limit transport time when possible

Chicken Mom Lesson Learned: Quiet, darkened carriers reduce stress more than talking or checking constantly.

DAY ONE ENVIRONMENT

Before opening the carrier, confirm your heat source is on and stable (for chicks, the temp should be 95°F), food and water are already placed, bedding is dry and spread evenly, and the brooder area is quiet and draft-free.

WHAT DOES “NORMAL” LOOK LIKE

Once chickens are placed in their space, **step back and watch**. It's common to see chicks peeping loudly then settling, pullets standing still and observing, or chickens huddling briefly then exploring. At first, expect slow or minimal eating or drinking due to the new environment.

Gently dip a chick's beak in water once to show them where it is, then let instinct take over.

Your job during the first day is simple:

- Check that food and water are being used
- Watch for signs of stress (panting = too hot, piling = too cold, lethargy = sick chicken)
- Adjust heat only if behavior suggests it
- Keep handling minimal

Chicken Mom Lesson Learned: The calmer you are, the calmer they are.

DAY ONE BROODER CHECKLIST

- ☐ Brooder temperature set to 95°F - use a temperature gauge at *chick* level
- ☐ Heat source stable and localized (chicks can move away if needed)
- ☐ Bedding dry, spread evenly, and non-slippery
- ☐ Food placed where chicks can easily find it
- ☐ Fresh water filled (dip one beak to show location)
- ☐ Brooder area quiet, draft-free, and protected from pets/unsupervised children
- ☐ Observe chick behavior for 10–15 minutes after placement
- ☐ Minimal handling to allow the chicks time to settle and rest

Chicken Mom Lesson Learned: Calm and curious chicks mean you've done it right. Observation matters more than intervention on Day One.

WEEK ONE EXPECTATIONS

Week one isn't about doing more — it's about noticing sooner. Your role is to observe patterns, not micromanage. Watch for consistent access to warmth, clean water, and starter feed. Chick behavior should guide the adjustments you make rather than the clock or thermometer alone.

GREEN FLAGS

evenly spaced chicks
steady growth
alert posture
quiet peeping when settled

RED FLAGS

persistent huddling or piling or lethargy
pasted vents - compacted poop
refusal to eat or drink
loud distressed peeping not resolved with environmental changes

WEEK ONE MORNING CARE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Check brooder temperature (95°F at chick level for Week 1) - Ensure heat source is stable and secure
- ☐ Observe chick behavior to verify they are alert, moving, or resting quietly - check for pasted vents or lethargic chicks
- ☐ Refill fresh water (clean, room temperature)
- ☐ Confirm feed is dry and accessible
- ☐ Check bedding for moisture or spills; spot-clean if needed

WEEK ONE EVENING CARE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Check brooder temperature (95°F at chick level for Week 1), and food / water levels and accessibility
- ☐ Observe chick behavior before touching anything are they alert, moving, or resting quietly - Look for pasted vents or lethargic chicks
- ☐ Check bedding for moisture or spills; spot-clean if needed



WEEK ONE CARE TRACKER

Day	Morning Check	Evening Check	Notes
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

What to Watch & Note

Use the “Notes” column for:
Huddling or piling
Loud or distressed peeping
Pasted vents
Reduced activity
Growth changes or feather development
Anything that feels “off”

You don’t need long notes - a word or two is enough.

Weekly Reflection

What went well this week?

Does anything need to be adjusted for next week?



CHICKEN TENDING 101

WEEK 2

Week 2 is about cleanliness and consistency.

If the brooder stays dry, food and water stay clean, and behavior looks calm - you're right on track. Week 2 chicks are more active, more curious, and growing fast. Your role shifts slightly from monitoring to maintaining clean systems and watching behavior trends.

GREEN FLAGS

- Increased activity and exploration
- Strong appetite and steady drinking
- Even spacing with less huddling
- Early feather development (especially wings)

RED FLAGS

- Persistent piling or isolation
- Wet bedding or strong odors
- Dirty vents (pasty butt)
- Lethargy or poor appetite

WEEK TWO CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

Now that the chicks are moving, eating, and drinking more, it's important to establish a cleaning routine that keeps the brooder, food and water dishes relatively clean.

Clean the Brooder - A dry brooder is more important than a spotless one.

- ☐ Remove wet or heavily soiled bedding daily
- ☐ Add fresh bedding to keep the surface dry
- ☐ Do not fully strip the brooder unless odor or moisture is present

Clean Food and Water Dishes - Avoid soaps with strong scents; plain warm water to clean is sufficient.

- ☐ Rinse waterers daily
- ☐ Scrub water dishes every 1-2 days with warm water
- ☐ Clean feed dishes as needed to remove dust or bedding

WEEK TWO TROUBLESHOOTING

Clogged chick vents (pasty butt - which is dried droppings blocking the vent) can happen in the early weeks, especially during growth spurts or temperature fluctuations.

Step-by-Step Cleaning Pasty Butt:

1. Fill a small bowl with warm (not hot) water
2. Gently dip or soak only the affected area for 2-5 minute increments
3. Allow droppings to soften, do not pull dry material
4. Gently wipe clean with a soft cloth or paper towel
5. Pat dry completely
6. Return chick to warmth

Never force removal. Tearing skin can cause injury or infection. If pasty butt is recurring, recheck brooder temperature, water accessibility, and drafts.

WEEK TWO MORNING CARE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Check brooder temperature (90°F at chick level for Week 2)
- ☐ Observe chick behavior to verify they are alert, moving, or resting quietly - check for pasted vents or lethargic chicks
- ☐ Refill fresh water (clean, room temperature)
- ☐ Confirm feed is dry and accessible
- ☐ Check bedding for moisture or spills; spot-clean if needed

WEEK TWO EVENING CARE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Check brooder temperature (90°F at chick level for Week 2)
- ☐ Observe chick behavior to verify they are alert, moving, or resting quietly - Look for pasted vents or lethargic chicks
- ☐ Refill fresh water (clean, room temperature)
- ☐ Confirm feed is dry and accessible
- ☐ Check bedding for moisture or spills; spot-clean if needed



WEEK TWO CARE TRACKER

Day	Morning Check	Evening Check	Notes
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

What to Watch & Note

During the morning, you're looking for confident movement, curiosity, and chicks spreading out more than Week 1.

At night the chicks should be calmly settling, quietly peeping, and be in a relaxed resting posture.

Weekly Reflection

What went well this week?

Does anything need to be adjusted for next week?



CHICKEN TENDING 101

WEEK 3

Week 3 is where systems matter most. If space, dryness, and routine are solid, the chicks will do the rest. Chicks start to feel less like fragile babies and more like tiny, confident dinosaurs. Activity levels jump, wing feathers become noticeable, and chicks spend less time under direct heat.

GREEN FLAGS

Visible wing and back feather growth - less reliance on heat during the day

Short bursts of running, hopping, and wing flapping

Strong appetite and higher water consumption

RED FLAGS

Continued tight huddling

Bald spots from crowding or pecking

Persistently wet bedding

Lethargy or isolation

WEEK THREE CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

Bedding will need more consistent clean-up this week, as the chicks begin to explore more and grow into their personalities and natural inclinations. Consider adding fresh bedding more often rather than full strip-outs.

Clean the Brooder - If odor appears, moisture is the cause, not cleanliness frequency.

- ☐ Remove wet or heavily soiled bedding daily
- ☐ Add fresh bedding to keep the surface dry
- ☐ Do not fully strip the brooder unless odor or moisture is present

Clean Food and Water Dishes - Avoid soaps with strong scents; plain warm water to clean is sufficient.

- ☐ Rinse waterers daily
- ☐ Scrub water dishes every 1-2 days with warm water
- ☐ Clean feed dishes as needed to remove dust or bedding

WEEK THREE TROUBLESHOOTING

Week 3 is when many brooders start feeling tight. Brooder space should be adjusted more towards 1 sf per chick. Crowding at this stage often leads to pecking and stress on the chicks.

If possible:

- Expand brooder walls
- Add a second feeding or watering station
- Raise feeders and waterers slightly to reduce bedding contamination
- Increase usable floor space

This is a good week to begin calm human interaction with short, gentle handling sessions. Chicks are learning social structure now, so calm environments matter.

WEEK THREE MORNING CARE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Check brooder temperature (85°F at chick level for Week 3)
- ☐ Observe spacing (ensure there's adequate space) and movement before touching anything. Note feather development and activity.
- ☐ Refill fresh water and feed
- ☐ Spot-clean wet or compacted bedding
- ☐ Check vents (pasty butt should be rare by now)

WEEK THREE EVENING CARE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Check brooder temperature (85°F at chick level for Week 3)
- ☐ Observe chicks as they settle for rest- confirm they can access warmth without piling
- ☐ Top off water
- ☐ Remove heavily soiled bedding
- ☐ Reduce nighttime disturbances
- ☐ Secure brooder from drafts and pets



WEEK THREE CARE TRACKER

Day	Morning Check	Evening Check	Notes
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

What to Watch & Note

During the morning, you're looking for confident movement, wing stretching, and chicks choosing when to use heat.

At night the chicks should be relaxed grouping near (but not packed under) the heat source.

Weekly Reflection

What went well this week?

Does anything need to be adjusted for next week?



CHICKEN TENDING 101

WEEK 4

Week 4 is about balance — less heat, more space, and steady routines. When systems are solid, chicks naturally step into independence. Chicks begin to look and act like small chickens instead of babies. This week is about supporting independence while keeping systems clean, dry, and predictable.

GREEN FLAGS

Noticeable feather coverage (especially wings and back) - less time spent under heat

Increased scratching and exploratory behavior

Strong appetite and increased water use

RED FLAGS

Persistent huddling under heat

Bald patches from crowding or pecking

Wet or ammonia-smelling bedding

Lethargy or isolation

WEEK FOUR CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

Bedding will need frequent refreshes this week. This is also a critical week to provide the chicks with enough room to grow. Brooder space should expand to 1½ sf per chick.

Clean the Brooder - Keep in mind that odor = moisture. Add more bedding before increasing cleaning frequency

- ❑ Remove wet or damp bedding daily
- ❑ Add fresh bedding often to maintain dryness

Clean Food and Water Dishes

- ❑ Rinse waterers daily
- ❑ Scrub water dishes every 1–2 days with warm water
- ❑ Clean feed dishes as needed to remove dust or bedding

WEEK FOUR TROUBLESHOOTING

Brooder space should be adjusted more towards 1 - 1½ sf per chick. Crowding at this stage *will* lead to pecking and stress on the chicks. This week you can start early outdoor exposure if temperatures are mild and dry.

Outdoor time is optional and should be gradual.

- Short, supervised outdoor time may begin
- Only during warm parts of the day
- No wind, no damp ground
- Always return to heat afterward

Begin thinking about the coop, but they're not moving in yet. Start checking for coop cleanliness and readiness: verify coop is predator-proof, and meets chicken space requirements.

WEEK FOUR MORNING CARE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Check brooder temperature (80°F at chick level for Week 4)
- ☐ Observe spacing and movement, noting behavior changes or increased activity
- ☐ Refill fresh water and feed
- ☐ Spot-clean wet or compacted bedding
- ☐ Check feather coverage and overall condition

WEEK FOUR EVENING CARE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Check brooder temperature (80°F at chick level for Week 4)
- ☐ Observe chicks as they settle for rest- confirm they can access warmth
- ☐ Top off water
- ☐ Remove heavily soiled bedding
- ☐ Reduce nighttime disturbances
- ☐ Secure brooder from drafts and pets



WEEK FOUR CARE TRACKER

Day	Morning Check	Evening Check	Notes
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

What to Watch & Note

During the morning, you're looking for confident movement, feathered wings, and chicks choosing when to rest near heat.

At night, look for loose grouping, quiet peeping, and relaxed postures.

Weekly Reflection

What went well this week?

Does anything need to be adjusted for next week?



CHICKEN TENDING 101

WEEK 5

Week 5 is about listening to the birds. When feathers, behavior, and environment align, the transition becomes easy. Chicks are firmly out of the fragile stage. Feathering is well underway, heat dependence is minimal, and curiosity about the “outside world” increases. Some flocks will be nearly ready for the coop; others need another week or two (both are normal).

GREEN FLAGS

- Full feather coverage on wings and back
- Minimal use of heat during the day
- Strong appetite and steady growth
- Confident movement and social behavior

RED FLAGS

- Persistent reliance on heat
- Bald patches from crowding
- Lethargy or poor appetite
- Stress behaviors (excessive pecking, piling)

WEEK FIVE CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

Chicks absolutely need to have their space. This is a critical week to provide the chicks with enough room to grow and prevent stress. Brooder space should be at 1½ sf per chick.

Clean the Brooder

- ☐ Remove wet or damp bedding daily
- ☐ Add fresh bedding often to maintain dryness

Clean Food and Water Dishes

- ☐ Rinse waterers daily
- ☐ Scrub water dishes every 1–2 days with warm water
- ☐ Clean feed dishes as needed to remove dust or bedding

WEEK FIVE TROUBLESHOOTING

Outdoor exposure helps chicks with muscle development, confidence, and coop transition readiness. If outside weather is dry and mild:

- Increase supervised outdoor time
- Allow chicks to explore safely during warm daylight hours
- Always provide a way back to warmth (or a heat source)

Some flocks will be ready to transition to coops late Week 5 or early Week 6. Others need more time. Readiness matters more than age. Questions to ask that can help indicate if your flock is ready:

- Are nighttime temps consistently safe (between 75-80°F)?
- Is the coop fully predator-proof?
- Is ventilation good without drafts?
- Is bedding ready and dry?

WEEK FIVE MORNING CARE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Check brooder temperature (75°F or ambient, if safe)
- ☐ Observe how often chicks choose heat.
- ☐ Refill fresh water and feed
- ☐ Spot-clean wet or compacted bedding
- ☐ Check feather coverage and overall condition
- ☐ Note any signs of stress or crowding

WEEK FIVE EVENING CARE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Check brooder temperature (75°F or ambient, if safe)
- ☐ Observe and confirm chicks are comfortable without tight huddling
- ☐ Top off water
- ☐ Remove heavily soiled bedding
- ☐ Reduce nighttime disturbances
- ☐ Secure brooder from drafts and pets
- ☐ Note any chicks lagging behind developmentally



WEEK FIVE CARE TRACKER

Day	Morning Check	Evening Check	Notes
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

What to Watch & Note

Chicks should be moving freely, eating well, and largely self-regulating warmth.

At night, chicks should be calmly settling in a loose grouping with minimal reliance on heat.

Weekly Reflection

What went well this week?

Does anything need to be adjusted for next week?



CHICKEN TENDING 101

WEEK 6

When feathers, temperatures, and preparation align, chickens step forward naturally. The Week 6 coop transition isn't a test — it's a handoff. Chicks officially graduate from brooder life *if conditions are right*. Most chicks are fully feathered, largely independent of supplemental heat, and ready to begin life in the coop. This week is about timing, environment, and minimizing stress, *not* forcing a move based on the calendar.

GREEN FLAGS

- Full feather coverage (including chest and back)
- Little to no use of heat overnight
- Confident movement and strong appetite
- Calm social behavior

RED FLAGS

- Bald areas or patchy feathering
- Tight nighttime huddling
- Lethargy or reluctance to move
- Cold stress (shivering, piling, distressed peeping)

WEEK SIX COOP READINESS CHECK

Before moving birds to the coop, confirm:

- ☐ Coop is predator-proof (hardware cloth, secure latches)
- ☐ Ventilation is adequate without drafts
- ☐ Bedding is dry and layered
- ☐ Roosting bars are installed
- ☐ Food and water are placed and accessible
- ☐ Nighttime temps are appropriate for your climate (70-75°F)

If even one item isn't ready, waiting another week is the right call.

WEEK SIX COOP TRANSITION HOW-TO

Best practice for transitioning to a coop:

- Move birds during daylight
- Place them directly into the coop
- Allow them to explore before nightfall
- Close the coop securely at dusk

Avoid moving pullets into coop at night, immediately mixing with older birds, and reintroducing heat unless absolutely necessary. Expect mild confusion the first night. That's normal.

After the first night, check all birds made it through the night, confirm water and feed usage, and observe flock behavior closely for 2–3 days. Stress usually resolves quickly when the environment is stable.

WEEK SIX MORNING CARE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Confirm chicks stayed comfortable without added heat
- ☐ Refill fresh water and feed
- ☐ Spot-clean remaining brooder bedding
- ☐ Observe feather coverage and energy levels
- ☐ Check weather forecast for coop transition planning

WEEK SIX EVENING CARE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Observe settling behavior (no tight huddling)
- ☐ Confirm ambient temperatures are safe
- ☐ Top off water and feed
- ☐ Secure brooder or coop area
- ☐ Final headcount
- ☐ Reduce disturbances before dark
- ☐ Note any birds lagging behind developmentally



WEEK SIX CARE TRACKER

Day	Morning Check	Evening Check	Notes
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

What to Watch & Note

Chicks should act unfazed by cooler mornings and move confidently through out the day.

Evenings or night checks should have chicks relaxed with roost-seeking behavior and calm settling.

Weekly Reflection

What went well this week?

Does anything need to be adjusted for next week?



CHICKEN TENDING 101

WEEK 7+ NEXT STEPS

Once your chickens are settled in the coop, daily care becomes simpler and more predictable. The goal is no longer constant monitoring, it's maintaining clean systems and consistent routines.

DAILY COOP CHECKS

After transitioning to the coop, chicken care shifts to 5-10 minutes daily to ensure food and water accessibility and that your chickens are secure.

- Refill food and water as needed and verify that all birds have access
- Check that all birds alert and moving (not limping, isolating, or in distress), feathers are smooth, and chickens have bright eyes

WEEKLY COOP CHECKS

- Bedding Refresh - Remove visibly soiled or damp bedding, add fresh bedding to keep surfaces dry, and focus under roosts and high-traffic areas.
- Odor Check - A healthy coop smells like straw or wood, if there's an ammonia smell there is likely a moisture problem.
- Roost & Nest Check - Brush off droppings, replace nesting material as needed, and (once chickens begin producing eggs (at *approximately* 16 weeks) remove broken eggs immediately.
- Coop & Run Perimeter Check - Inspect latches, hinges, and fencing; look for digging or predator damage.



WEEKLY CHICKEN CARE TRACKER

Day	Daily Check	Notes (Egg Count)
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Green Flags

Walking, scratching, perching, and moving confidently. They should respond to you, flock-mates, and environmental cues.

Red Flags

Additional attention is needed if there is limping, sitting apart from the flock (isolation), or reluctance to move.

Weekly Reflection

What went well this week?

What can we do to make next week better?

BEST PRACTICES FOR CHICKEN RUNS

The chicken run is your flock's daily outdoor living space — where they scratch, forage, and burn off energy safely. A well-designed run provides room to move, protection from predators, and shelter from the elements, making it just as important as the coop itself.

☐ Space Matters:

- Minimum 10 sq ft per chicken
- More space = less stress and pecking

☐ Predator Protection:

- Fully enclosed with ¼" hardware cloth
- Secure roof or overhead netting
- Check perimeter weekly

☐ Ground Management:

- Rotate run areas if possible
- Add straw, leaves, or wood chips to reduce mud
- Watch for standing water
- Chickens are natural omnivores and will eat insects, worms, flies, crickets, grasshoppers, and beetles (non-toxic species)

☐ Shade & Shelter:

- Always provide shade
- Windbreaks matter in cold or windy climates

MONTHLY & SEASONAL CHECK-INS

- ☐ Trim overgrown vegetation around the coop
- ☐ Adjust ventilation for weather changes
- ☐ Plan ahead for heat waves or cold snaps
- ☐ Reassess space as birds grow or flock size changes

FEEDING OVERVIEW

Chickens are curious and opportunistic eaters. Thoughtful feeding choices are just as important as knowing what's technically safe. Balanced feed first, treats second, and everyone wins.

Chicken Mom Lesson Learned: If a chicken can reach it, they *will* try to eat it.

WHAT CHICKENS EAT (BY AGE)?

Week 1-6: Starter feed (crumble labeled 20–22% protein)

- **Medicated Starter** (usually with amprolium) builds immunity while reducing the risk of coccidiosis, a common intestinal disease in young chicks; used as a risk-management tool, not as a requirement.
- **Non-Medicated Starter** allows chicks to develop natural immunity without medication, best for controlled environments. In general, requires extra vigilance about dry bedding and sanitation.
- **BEST PRACTICE:** Choose one approach and stick with it during the starter phase.

Week 7-16: Transition to Grower feed (crumble or pellets) with 18-20% protein. Week 7-8 should gradually mix grower feed with starter crumble until transition is complete for Grower feed only beginning Week 9.

Beginning Week 8: Additional Treats (~ 10% of intake)

- **Scratch grains** (cracked corn/grain mixes) are treats used sparingly.
- **Grit** is only needed once chickens start eating anything besides commercial feed (such as scraps or foraging in the run), as it helps them grind food in their gizzard.
- **Kitchen scraps** should make up no more than 10% of a chicken's diet and should always be plain, fresh, and unseasoned.
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Week 17+: Transition to Layer feed (pellets) with 16-18% protein. Gradually mix Layer feed with Grower feed for 10-14 days.

SAFE (~10%)	RARE (<5%)	NEVER
Fruits: apples (no seeds), berries, watermelon, grapes, bananas, pears, mangos. Vegetables: lettuce, kale, cucumbers, squash (all), carrots, broccoli & cauliflower, green beans, peas, bell peppers (no seeds) Plain Cooked Starches: white or brown rice, pasta, potatoes	Too much of these items can reduce nutrition, egg production, or calcium absorption: spinach, cabbage, brussels sprouts, corn, oatmeal (plain cooked), bread, citrus, plain noodles or crackers	Toxic items for chickens: avocado (all parts), onion & garlic (all forms), rhubarb leaves, tomato leaves & stems, raw or green potatoes & peels, apple seeds & fruit pits, human junk food, spoiled food

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION - SOURCES USED

Academic Resources and Best Practices:

- Merck Veterinary Manual, Feeding and Management Practices in Poultry (<https://www.merckvetmanual.com/poultry/nutrition-and-management-poultry/feeding-and-management-practices-in-poultry>)
- Penn State Extension, Raising Small Flock Poultry (<https://extension.psu.edu/raising-small-flock-poultry>)
- University of California Agriculture & Natural Resources , UC Cooperative Extension - Poultry (<https://ucanr.edu/site/uc-cooperative-extension-poultry/backyard-poultry>)
- University of Illinois Extension, Sustainable Living Series: Getting Started with Backyard Chickens (<https://extension.illinois.edu/events/2024-04-02-getting-started-backyard-chickens-sustainable-living-series>)
- University of Minnesota Extension, Raising Layer Chicks and Pullets - (<https://extension.umn.edu/small-scale-poultry/raising-layer-chicks-and-pullets>)

SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES

SUPPORT GROUPS	HOMESTEADERS (FIRST-PERSON)
Utah Chicken Keepers Group	Simply Chickens Official - @simplychickensofficial
Backyard Chickens	Happy Acres Homestead -@happyacreshomesteadmn
Chicken Addiction Anonymous	B&R Homestead - @bandrhomestead
Everything Backyard Chickens	Laurel Ysebaert - @laurelysebaert
	Jesus King McCoy - @rastakountrydream
	Gabble's Garden - @gabbles_garden

FINAL NOTES

Raising chickens is less about doing everything perfectly and more about building steady routines, paying attention, and learning as you go. If food and water are clean, spaces stay dry, and your flock feels safe, you're doing the work that matters most. Trust what you've learned here and independently, trust what your chickens show you, and know that Chicken Life grows easier and more rewarding with every passing week.