

Megan Denton-Amaranth
Able Farms, Inc.
www.ablefarmspdx.com
ablefarmspdx@gmail.com

'POULTRY' RAISING BASICS

(Gallus domesticus)

A touch of history..

Domestication of the chicken dates to at least 2000 B.C. and their ancestry can be traced back to four species of wild jungle fowl from Southeast Asia. Globally, chickens are one of the most common and widespread domestic animals.

Why Raise Chickens...?

- Entertainment
- Eggs
- Dual Purpose
- Meat
- Fertilizer
- Bug and Weed Control
- Breeding Stock, Show, Heritage, Endangered, Production
- Farm Diversity

Humane, Ethical, and Social Responsibilities

- Ethos
- Social and Cultural Responsibility
- Finance vs. humane raising
- Address climate change strategies
- *Risk management-financial and emotional preparedness

Poultry Terminology

- Hen – mature female chicken > 1 year
- Pullet – immature female chicken < 1 year
- Cockerel – male chicken < 1 year

- Rooster male – chicken > 1 year
- Straight / hatchery run– unsexed
- Molt – natural process of shedding feathers
- Brood – to care for batch of chicks
- Broody – hen that sets
- Crop – pouch where chicken digests food
- Vent – opening through which hens lay eggs

Feed Intake

- Pastured
- Grain - seeds of perennials generally higher in nutrition than annuals (grains)
- Processed Feed
- Cover Crops
- *Genetics
- Meat or Egg Production

Brooding

- Equipment
- Feeders
- Waterers
- Temperature
- Nutrition
- Oyster shell-egg layer, or another adequate calcium carbonate
- Grit is critical - can use stream sand which is generally higher mineral content. Add hay chaff - seeds of perennials generally higher in nutrition than annuals (grains) **or** buy Grit to fit your flock age
- Fresh green vegetable matter - garden waste, grass clippings

Disease Prevention-(always have medical supply kit)

- Sun
- Sanitation
- Adequate space
- Fresh air / ventilation
- Proper nutrition
- Cull as needed (12-18 weeks, generally depending...)

- Protect from predators
- Wet weather and standing water
- Mixing poultry species

Common Poultry Diseases and Health Management

- Viral dyspnea aka Infectious Laryngotracheitis
- Chronic respiratory disease aka Mycoplasmosis
- Coccidiosis - internal(protozoa) and external parasites(mites)
- Bumblefoot aka Pad dermatitis
- Lice

Pastured Poultry Production

- Feed requirements drop 30 - 50% (layer breeds)
- Housing-electrical fencing, barns, etc.
- Hoop houses
- Variations on the chicken tractor
- Grass height important (too tall, will be trampled and lack nutrients)
- Rotation with other livestock and cover crops

Poultry Processing

- Requirements for Federal Inspection
 - FSIS oversees and licenses facilities
 - Inspects birds themselves
- Exemptions from Federal Inspection
 - No more than 1,000 birds per year
 - All poultry must be raised on producer's own farm
- Producer may not buy or sell offsite birds
- No poultry is distributed outside state

State of Oregon

Currently Oregon law under the '1000 bird exemption' allows for poultry growers to process up to 11000 birds onsite. These birds can only be sold off the farm. In order to sell at farmer's markets, restaurants, and retail outlets they must be processed in an ODA licensed facility. ODA licensed facilities allow for up to 20,000 birds to be processed annually. Some farms in the area have upgraded their onsite slaughtering facility to be ODA licensed facilities. There

are only a handful of poultry processors in the State of Oregon.

Processors - Harrington Poultry, Helvetia Poultry Processing aka Marion Acres Processing, Oregon Poultry Processing, (your own farm/operation).

Egg Production

- Production layers: 250-280 eggs / year
- Average brown egg layer: 150-200 eggs / year
- Hens begin laying at about 5-6 months of age
- Production falls off as hens age - replace every 2-3 years to maintain profit

Egg color: a few examples, white eggs are great too!

- White (Leghorns)
- Brown (Barred Rock, Rhode Island Reds, Buff Orpington, Black Australorp, New Hampshire Reds)
- Blue-ish (Auracana/Americana) 1 egg every 3 days
- **Yolk Color** - affected by plant pigments beta carotene and xanthophylls (green plant material or yellow corn will turn yolks orange)

Winter Egg Production

- Egg production will decline in the fall and may cease during Nov - Jan
- Can sustain with lighting: 40-60-watt bulb @16 hours / day on timer **or** 15-watt bulb @ 24 hours / day

Egg Processing

- Storage: 1 month or more in the fridge
- 2-3 months < 55 degrees at 75% humidity
- Egg quality diminishes in storage

Egg Handling

- o Nest boxes
- o Transport
- o Washing or Not washing-shelf life effects
- o Candling and inspection
- o Egg Cartons
- o Egg Handlers License
- o Cooling

Coop/Housing Design

- Stationary vs. Mobile
- Should provide protection from weather

- Need adequate ventilation
- Feeders
- Waterers
- Roosts - (8 - 12) inches roost space per adult, 15 inches between roosts (sloping) ● Nest boxes - 12" x 12" spacing, 4" lip across front, 2 feet off floor, 1 box per 5 birds
- Predator control-fencing, electrical fencing, live- traps, solar lights, mechanical doors, etc. etc.

Guides

The Chicken Health Handbook

Sustainable Poultry Organization

Oregon State University Small Farms >Poultry

The Chicken Encyclopedia, Gail Damerow.

The Merck Veterinary Manual-6th Edition.

The Livestock Conservancy

American Poultry Association (APA)

American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC)

Animal Welfare Institute

Society for the Preservation of Poultry Antiquities (SPPA)

Poultry Hatcheries (a few)

Jenks Hatchery, Tangent, OR

Phinney Hatchery, Walla Walla, WA

Murray McMurray, Webster City, IA

Privet Hatchery, Portales, New Mexico

Moyer Hatchery, Quakertown, Pennsylvania

Certifications and Marketing

- Direct vs. Retail
- Designations: certified organic, free-range, free-nested, cage free, pastured, certified humane, non gmo, etc. etc...
- Farm direct- on site sell to direct consumers
- CSA models - Community Supported Agriculture
- Farmers Markets, Farm to Table, Wineries, Pop Ups