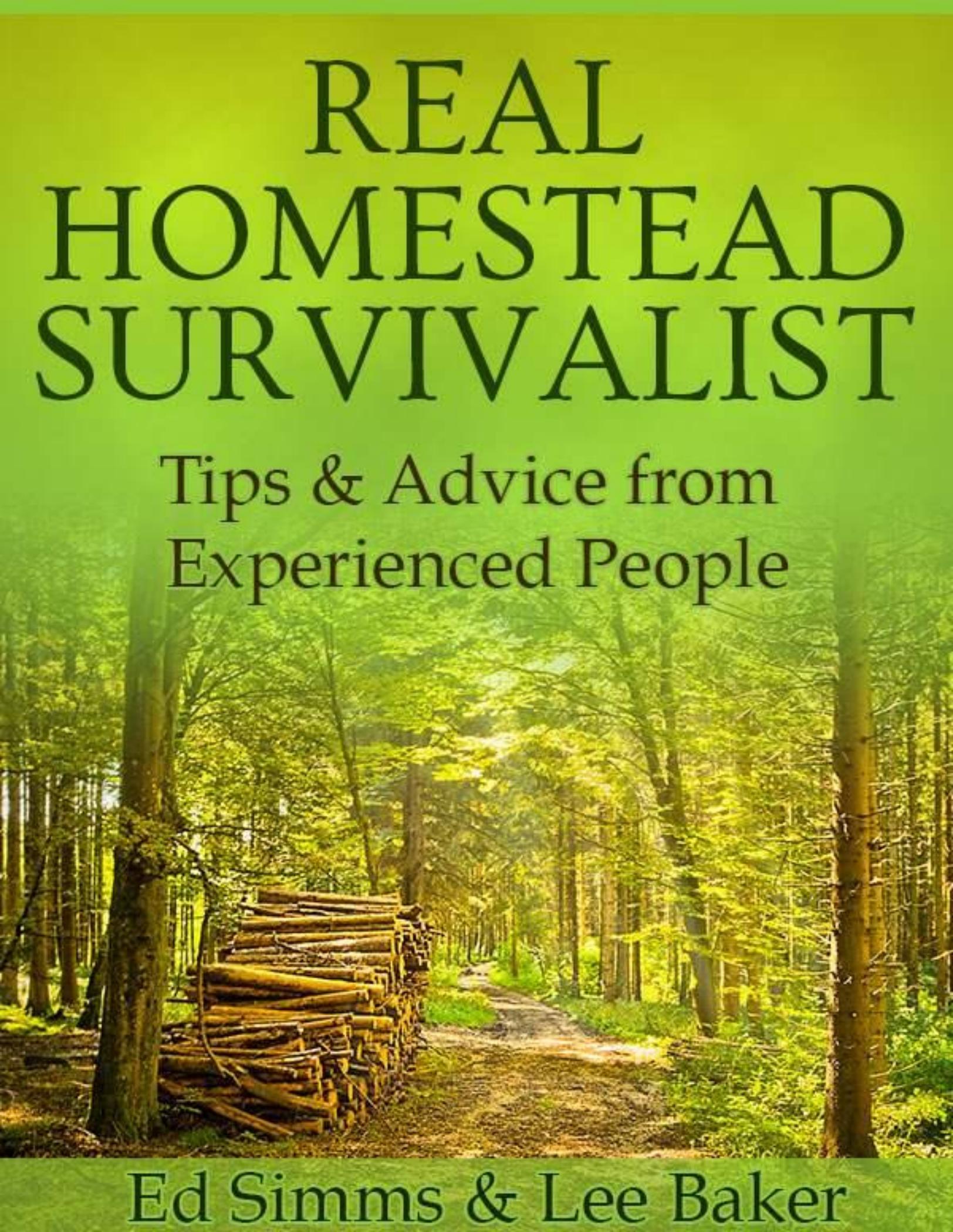


REAL HOMESTEAD SURVIVALIST

Tips & Advice from
Experienced People

A photograph of a forest path with a large stack of logs on the left side. The path is dirt and leads into a dense forest of tall, thin trees. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day. The stack of logs is neatly piled and occupies the lower-left foreground.

Ed Simms & Lee Baker

The Homestead Survivalist Series: Raising Chickens

by Ed Simms & Lee Baker

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Table of Contents

- 1. About the Real Survivalist Series of Books**
- 2. Advice from Ken Richter**
- 3. Some Good Reasons for Raising Chickens**
- 4. Some Precautions**
- 5. Breeds of Chickens**
- 6. Raising Chickens from Little Chicks**
- 7. How to Start Chickens from Eggs**
- 8. Maintaining Your Chicken Coop**
- 9. "Dual Purpose" The Best Chickens for Eggs & Meat**
- 10. Feeding Your Chickens**
- 11. Feeding Baby Chicks**
- 12. A Few Final Thoughts**

1. About the Real Survivalist Series of Books

It's no myth that we are living in a very unique time in the USA and the entire world. If you are ready to take action to protect you and your loved ones from many possible dangers of: financial collapse, food shortages, neighborhood crime, and an unstable US government who many US citizens do not trust, the "Real Homestead Survivalist" Series on Amazon Kindle will help benefit you in many ways.

Our team of writers go in-depth with each Homesteader Survivalist that we interview and write based on what is revealed to us. Every new book in this series will show you ways which you can apply their tips and techniques. Book topics range from growing your own food to protecting your family.

Please be sure to try a free sample of all the "Real Homestead Survivalist" books on Amazon for your Kindle.

Sincerely,

Ed Simms & Lee Baker

2. Advice from Ken Richter



I have a small family and decided on buying eight "Plymouth Rock" egg laying/meat producing hens which started out as day-old chicks. We use a my portable chicken coop, or what known as a tractor. It is movable and I have wheels to place underneath. Because the chicken coop is mobile, this helps keep things in the yard more sanitary and the areas where the coop was moved from actually helps the fertilize the lawn.

Every morning, I feed the hens a chicken feed from the local farming store. Their water container needs cleaned. There's a sliding door on the side of the chicken coop that I slide open to let the chickens back out into a fenced-in run area for them to pick at the soil during the day.

There are three nesting boxes that the hens lay eggs daily inside of. I'm able to open a side panel to reach in and grab the eggs, instead of crouching inside of the coop. With eight egg-laying-hens, I get an average of five to eight eggs every day from spring to fall.

My hens live in a four foot by eight foot coop. There are a few long roosts or small boards stretched across inside of the coop. Chickens feel safer when they are sleeping above the bottom of the coop. Inside of the coop there is their water container and their feeder. A few closeable windows are on the sides for ventilation in the summer time. During the winter time, I install red radiating light for warmth.

The chickens will instinctively enter the coop by themselves at dusk. I'll close the door and slide the latch to avoid unwanted entry into the coop.



3. Some Good Reasons for Raising Chickens

There are many good reasons to raise chickens at your own home, here are some of mine:

1. Chickens really like food scraps from the kitchen. They have incredible appetites and their little stomachs can handle almost any kind of waste foods. Don't throw out all of your leftovers, it could be better used to supplement your own group of chickens.
2. Almost unlimited supply of fresh eggs. Do you know anyone who doesn't consume eggs? These eggs are all fresh, healthy, and organic. If you have an over-supply, eggs can be used for a valuable bartering tool. Eggs can be dehydrated or frozen. My wife has cooked large batches of scrambled eggs and freezes them in large ziplock bags.
1. The droppings that chickens make is a great fertilizer. This waste has been utilized for hundreds of years by farmers and enhances the soil for raising very productive crops. For organic gardeners, the chicken waste helps to control pests and insects.
1. My chickens require very little care, besides feeding them with a daily clean water and the required food supply. Every week, the bedding and little droppings should be cleaned. Watching baby chicks being hatched and growing is a great educational tool for children as well as adults.
1. Letting my chickens graze freely in the garden helps to remove weeds, insects, snails and slugs. The waste that the chickens drop onto the garden creates a rich fertilizer.

4. Some Precautions

1. Check first if you live in the city! It may not be legal raise chickens in your own urban neighborhood. Living in the country or a rural location usually isn't a problem. Find out with the local animal control or and check your city ordinances.

1. Offer fresh eggs to your neighbors. Try to stay on their good side.
1. Watch the amount of space that you have available. Things can start to get out of hand if you begin breeding or purchase too many chickens.
1. Start off on the right foot by purchasing quality materials when build your chicken coop. There are many night-predators who will try to invade and attack your chickens. They need to be protected.
1. For beginners, choose a rugged type of breed like Rhode Island Red chickens. Make sure that your livestock is live and healthy.
1. Don't purchase a rooster unless you live out in the country and plan on breeding your chickens. Roosters will make a tremendous amount of noise, starting at five in the morning to boot.
1. Create a system and schedule for cleaning out your chicken's living area. This will ensure that you will continue to collect fresh and healthy eggs along with keeping your hens strong and healthy.
1. There are a few treatments and medications that should be kept near you. There will be situations were you will need to treat your livestock.
1. Pests and mice will try to invade your chicken feed containers. Keep your feed storage container covered and protected.
1. Make a choice from the beginning to decide if your want your chickens for their meat and eggs or to keep as pets. Beware if you give them pet names, you and your family may develop an attachment and you will forget why you wanted to raise chickens to begin with.

5. Breeds of Chickens

White Leghorn Hen, Great Egg layer, but too small for meat



Because of modern technology, there are a tremendous amount of chicken breeds. You can choose from many feather patterns, colors, shapes, and sizes. There are a total of three hundred and fifty combinations. To simplify this, there are four major categories of chicken breeds: exotic or exhibition birds, egg layers, broilers;for their meat, and dual purpose chickens which are egg and meat producers.

A few of the breeds are called: Showgirl, Silkie, Silver Laced Wyandotte, Redcap, Russian Orloff, and Rosecomb.

There are many things that are different between the breeds. Things like their temperament, amount off eggs produced, color of the eggs, the amount of noise that they make, and how well the chickens can handle being confined in a coop. If you live in a close neighborhood, the amount of chicken noises might be important. There are some people who don't recommend mixing younger chickens with older ones, however, this hasn't been a problem for me.

For the most part, the majority of breeds can handle all climates well. There are certain breeds which need more heat like Minorcas and Phoenix. And certain breeds like cool conditions like Chanteclers and Brahmas. You will collect eggs from every

breed, but the ornamentals will usually make a smaller egg size and may produce less or more eggs. Some breeds that lay even a medium amount of eggs could be enough for most average-sized families. The eggs from Bantam chickens will be smaller than average.

The most common egg-laying bird is the is the Leghorn hen. They will lay up to 250 up to 300 incredible-edible eggs per year. Leghorns are bred for laying and not for their meat, since they only weigh around four pounds maximum.

Broiler chickens are bred for their meat. These meat birds can weigh up to eight pounds or more. If some broiler hens or roosters are pumped full of feed, your roosters could start to weigh up to seventeen to eighteen pounds. The meat-makers can be butchered when they reach the age of five to twentyfour weeks old. It all depends on how much meat you want for each bird.

Cornish Game Hens are really just a small-young 5-week-old version of the “Cornish Rock” breed of chicken.

These type of common grocery store chickens are found on your butcher’s fresh meat counters are most likely an 8-week-old broiler breed that could be either male or female. However, the roasters that you will fin in grocery store freezer were grow up to eleven to fifteen weeks old before being butchered.

By far, the most popular “egg-laying” hen is the Leghorn chicken. This breed was developed for that purpose. The Leghorn can produce two hundred fifty to three hundred delicious breakfast eggs per year. A Leghorn will weigh around four pounds which is too small to expect to butcher up for meat eating purposes.

Personally, I purchased Barred Plymouth Rocks and Rhode Island Reds. These two breeds were available at my local chicken hatchery. The two breeds are laid-back, high-egg-laying, and pretty quiet birds and can handle being confined pretty well. I get around seventy five percent in egg production from my chickens. Which means that every twelve hens will lay around nine eggs per day.

I have a favorite type of rooster. It’s called the Jersey-Giant. They are available in white or black and are large-sized roosters. From the saddle it’s about sixteen inches. The Jersey Giant hens are a medium egg layers compared to the eggs produced by a Rhode Island Red or a Plymouth Rock chicken. The Jersey Giant is a calm breed and very easy going, but requires more room inside of the chicken coop and their runner tract because of it’s large size.

Another unique breed called the Araucana are prone to flying around in the coop. They are much more active than the average breed. Araucana’s also produce green shell-colored eggs. I have a Rhode Island Red that mated with an Araucana rooster and the eggs that the hen lays are olive-colored.

There’s even a breed called “Easter Egger.” This special breed of chicken will lay green or blue eggs. They are a bit difficult to find for purchase. Easter Eggers also like

to fly around and are not very calm.

There are breeds meant for exhibition or competitions. They are multi-colored chickens, with very flashy and colored feathers from head to toe. The competitions for these birds are called (poultry pulchritude.) As you can see, once you get used to raising chickens, you can experiment with adding different breeds for fun and enjoyment.

Jersey Giant, a large chicken, great for meat



6. Raising Chickens from Little Chicks



I purchased ten small chicks at the local farm supply store. They spent the first few weeks of their life in a small bird cage. You need about two inches of sawdust or wood shaving plant shavings in the bottom of your cage. Take your little birds and put them in the new cage.

You will need to give them water, food, and a heat lamp to keep them warm at night. I purchased a chicken feeder. The water in the bowl needs to be changed twice per day. There's a small lamp in the cage with a red heat radiating light bulb. The temperature needs to be around ninety five degrees. This simulates the warmth that their mother would have given them. Place a thermometer inside to make sure the temperature is correct.

The bird cage is inside of a cardboard box which is surrounded by styrofoam insulation. I placed a cardboard lid on the top and along with a few pieces of styrofoam over night, every night.

You need to plan on checking them at least five times per day throughout their first two weeks of life. There should be a thermometer to ensure that it stays close to ninety five degrees +/- a few degrees. Keep your pets and children away from your chicks. The feed and water must be clean. You can purchase a ready-made brooder, but it's not too difficult to make your own.



7. How to Start Chickens from Eggs

To start with, the eggs must be fertilized. It will take an average of twenty one days of "incubation" time for your eggs to hatch.

Before placing your eggs into the incubator, make sure that the temperature can reach and hold steady at ninety nine and one half degrees, 99.5F. The humidity inside of the incubator is critical. You will need a hygrometer and a thermometer. The hygrometer is use to measure humidity and can be bought at Walmart, Radio Shack, and cigar shops for a small amount of money. The amount of humidity needs to be at 50% during days 1 to 18, and then 70% to 80% during the last few days or incubation.

You need to turn the eggs around at least three times a day and make sure that it's an odd number. This turning must be done every day, including weekends. You should draw on the eggs using a soft marker. Draw an X on one end, the an O on the opposite end. You can keep the incubator continually moist with a few small paper cups or a use a pan for pies. Your incubator should come with recommended instructions.

There are a few people who hatch chickens that claim the birds will be born healthy and happy with no egg turning. But there is also a good chance of some eggs that will not hatch or the birds may be born deformed. I like the connection you make with the little ones by flipping the eggs myself.

8. Maintaining Your Chicken Coop

About once a month the bottom of the coop gets a thorough cleaning and I clean out their feed tray. You can use a hard rake and shovel to remove the old straw and chicken droppings. The old waste and straw is added to my composte pile. I also use a wire-brush and rinse out the bottom of the coop with a water bucket that has a one tablespoon of chlorine bleach added to it. When the bottom is dry, I add a generous layer of straw onto the bottom again.

Some experienced chicken owners even suggest to leave some chicken droppings inside of the coop after a cleaning. They claim that the biological action taking place in the litter will be helpful to the chickens and can stop cannibalism from happening.

9. "Dual Purpose" The Best Chickens for Eggs & Meat

For egg-laying hens, the chicken has around one year of peak production. After this twelve month period, the hen will lose her feathers or "molt" and stop producing eggs.

But in the next 6 to 8 weeks your hen will start to re-grow her feathered plumage and begin laying eggs again, but the amount produced will be ten percent drop in production.

You should try to maintain your flock in this manner:

To get the most for your money with collecting eggs and butchering chickens for meat, by spring time you can buy a group of day-old chickens that are a dual purpose breed or called straight runs. By the time your chicks grow to the age of twenty to twentyfour weeks old, your roosters could be butchered and then hens will be ready to lay eggs.

At the same time next year, purchase another group of dual-purpose-straight-run-chicks. Butcher your roosters at (20 to 24) weeks of age again and your youngest hens will lay eggs again. Repeat the cycle every year.

Because your hens produce the most eggs when exposed to fourteen hours of light per day, I recommend that you purchase a timer for lighting your coop for fourteen hours during the fall.

Plymouth Rock, a Dual Purpose Chicken



10. Feeding Your Chickens

Amazingly, chickens will eat practically anything and everything. I have seen my chickens eat anything like a snake or even a toad. The toad was finally let alone after the hens ganged up on it and found out it wasn't worth eating. Since chickens are omnivores, it means that they'll pretty much make an attempt to eat anything. They also eat things such as seeds, grains, grass, flowers, and fruits.

Feed pellets or commercial feed are the best choice to feed your chickens. Pellets contain the correct amount of energy, minerals, and protein. Because laying an egg drains nutrients from the hen, they require the best source of nutrition that they can feed on.

Your chickens feeder should always be full of feed. Their crops should still be full by the time they go to sleep. The "crop" is the place where food is temporarily stored after it is swallowed. During the night, your hen is still creating another egg inside of her. It will take over twenty five hours to create 1 egg. This is a good reason to let your hens eat whatever they can from sun-up to sun-down.

A standard sized chicken will eat close to $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ pounds of feed per day. This cost of feed can add up quickly. So on top of the feed pellets, letting your chickens scratch in the dirt and grass are also important to keep your poultry healthy. But for people who must live in severely cold areas, have a lot of predators roaming your yard, or those who don't have enough yard space, you'll need to feed your chickens in other ways.

Your chickens will like table scraps and will consume things from old coffee grinds to mushy green beans. I have a neighbor who feeds her hens raisins, but by chickens don't seem to like them. So every food in the compost pile is perfect for chickens, however if they're getting feed from feed pellets for their main diet, then your poultry shouldn't eat too much from the food scrap pile.

One food item, avocados are deadly to chickens. Some people believe that eggplant and potato skins will hurt chickens but my birds eat them without any problem. Too much carbs from foods like cereal and bread won't help to fatten your lean birds, so feed them with high-carb scraps sparingly.

Just about all of your garden waste, grubs, and weeds can be fed to your chickens. They will pick through your scrap pile and shred what they don't want. Also remember that grass clippings and long green onion stalks can cause clogged crops in your chickens. Instead of just tossing scraps into the chicken run, I place them into a container to keep the mess down. The birds will chew up what they don't want and it combines and quickly mixes with the dirt.

For the winter time, the scrap bin becomes frozen. So you could place fresh heads of cabbage into the coop or hang them from a string to make your birds fly around and keep them active. You could cut a small hole in a pumpkin. This will make the birds spend day pecking into it, frozen or not.

A few treats that you could give to your chickens are: cracked corn, one tablespoon of mealworms, or "hulled" sunflower seeds. Never over-feed your birds with these treats because it could cause serious damage to their bodies. Too many meal worms can damage a chicken's liver. The cracked corn and sunflower seeds have no nutritional value and can make your hens too fat which can cause problems with laying eggs.

If you decide to buy solid blocks of chicken treats from your feed store, mice and chipmunks could start to invade your chicken coop. These treats are good for your hens on a cold winter day if they are roaming around outside of the coop. But for the most part, a feed block isn't a good idea to me. Foods like an old tomato, container of yogurt, or slice of stale bread will stir up your birds with excitement.

11. Feeding Baby Chicks

The 1st two days of a baby chick's life will live off of the yolk which is inside of them. You should feed them a ground feed that's made up of eighteen percent protein and the chicks shouldn't eat any pellets because they're too low in protein and contain too much calcium.

Purchase a "chick starter" feed. Don't buy "special grow feeds" because those are for meat-birds that will become slaughtered. Also, don't feed them "laying hen pellets."

Some will use medicated feed to guard against a disease called "coccidia" but I've never needed to use it.

In the bottom of your chick's brooder, you could place a clod of dirt along with some greens into the saw dust or wood chips. This clump will help in a few ways. The chicks will be exposed to some small amounts of microbes to help develop a natural immunity and will give them an activity to do to avoid boredom. The dirt will get into the gizzards. And this will teach the chicks to poke at the dirt and not peck at each other which cut's down on pecking issues and aggression between the birds further down in their lives.

If you just can't resist giving them treats, remember to only feed those to them in very small amounts.

Fresh water for your flock of little birds is essential. Keep your water font off of the bottom by using a few by using a few bricks. Keep the water clean by replacing it a few times a day and scrub the water feeder clean weekly.

12. A Few Final Thoughts

There is a bit of work required for to raise chickens for their eggs and meat. These little birds are really fun to have around and have many benefits like remove pests from your lawn and garden and their droppings make a good fertilizer. Just remember to keep them protected from all of the varmints during the evening who will do their best to invade your chicken coop any way that they can. Follow the advice in this book and you will be off to a great start. And good luck with your own chickens!