



# Chicken Care

OPEN 7 DAYS  
Phone 4151 7200  
21 Woondooma St  
Bundaberg

Having a chicken is a wonderful addition to your garden. They are easy to care for pets and a productive member of the family. They will eat insects, give wonderful fertiliser for the garden and feed your family. Happy chicken's eggs out-shine store bought eggs in freshness and taste. Chickens are good for children to learn about how to nurture and care for animals, and they love collecting the eggs!

## Healthy Chickens

If your chicken gets sick it is most likely be caused from poor feeding, water or shelter. A good diet and hygiene is necessary for a healthy and happy chook.

**Routine waste removal will minimize the risk of diseases, smells and fly problems.**

**Coccidiosis** an intestinal parasite is the most common disease in backyard chickens and increases if the pen is wet and dirty with faeces.

**Mites** hide in crevices near perches and come out at night for a feed on chickens skin. If this is a problem spray the entire area with *Coopex*.

**Lice** may be a problem. Regular application of a lice dust like *Pestine* will remove the parasites, which infest chickens around the neck and vent (backside).

If the legs of the chickens become dry, with enlarged scales which start to lift, it is probably **Scaly Leg Mite**, they burrow under the skin. Rub *petroleum jelly or olive oil* into the leg, or you can use a spray-on oil.

**Stickfast fleas** can be a problem in summer and autumn and hundreds can infest a chicken around the comb and eyes. Treat the bird and the birds pen with *Maldison* or similar product. Cats and dogs can also be affected so they will need treating also.

Separate ill or wounded chickens because the weak will be picked on by the healthier chickens.

All medications are available from Boylans Produce and Boylans Garden and Pet.



Deluxe chicken houses are available from Boylans Garden and Pet.

There is a large range of styles in water and feed dispensers stocked both by Boylans Produce and Boylans Garden and Pet.

Boylans Produce have everything for you to make your own chicken coop.

## Checklist

- Point of Lay Hens - \$15.50  
Lohman Brown/Black/White
- Day Old Pullets - \$5.80  
Red/Black/White
- Chicken coop
- Roosting area
- Nesting area
- Area for foraging
- Water dispenser
- Food dispenser
- Straw for nesting box
- Medications if necessary

## Food

- Chicken crumble
- Lay mash
- Chicken pellets
- Pollard and meat meal
- Shell grit

## Council

Check with the Bundaberg Regional Council regarding the by-laws for having chickens or rooster in your yard (phone 1300 883 699)

# Feeding and Water

You'll want the chickens to have a balanced diet for the eggs you will eat. Commercial poultry mixes are nutritionally balanced to provide the correct amount of energy, protein, vitamins and minerals.

**Pellets** are recommended for mature birds as there is less wastage and they can consume what they need. Juveniles need **crumbles** as they are smaller and pellets are too big. Chickens will eat most household food scraps. Food scraps that aren't eaten on the same day may attract vermin such as rats and mice.

**Avoid feeding tomato skins, rhubarb leaves, raw potato peel, tea leaves, citrus or banana peel.**

Poultry also need **shell grit** to help them grind the food in their crop and to provide extra calcium for their eggs to have a hard shell. Give them fresh water in shallow trays or automatic water dispensers. Chickens have a pecking order so a **round feeder** will give all the chickens equal access to food. Feeders that hang from the roof are a good choice as they are off the ground, hold a lot of feed and discourage rats and mice.

Remember to use: **Chicken wire** on your enclosed pen otherwise you'll be feeding all the neighborhood sparrows and doves.

# Foxes and Dogs

Foxes can be a big problem for chickens, even in suburbia. They hunt at night so chickens need to be locked away securely at night. Foxes and some dogs will dig to reach their prey, keep this in mind when building a chicken pen. If the sides of the run is not connected to a concrete floor the netting should be dug at least 50cm into the ground with an apron of netting angled outward for 50cm at the base and attached around the entire pen. This should stop foxes from climbing over the top or underneath the fence. Also some breeds of dogs cannot resist the chase, if your chickens are out in the yard keep an eye on your dog or restrain him if he cannot be trusted, and put the chickens back in their pen when you go out.

Write the date on the eggs with a pencil if your not using them right away. To check if an egg is fresh, put it in a bowl of water. If the egg floats don't use it, the freshest eggs will sit horizontally on the bottom of the bowl. Use older egg whites for pavlova.

Hens don't need a rooster to lay eggs.

# Laying-Eggs

In her first year, a hen may lay up to five eggs a week There will also be a period of non - production during molting in winter. Egg production usually drops right down from the 4th year on, your hen may live 7-10 years. Collect your eggs daily, they keep better if they aren't washed, store in the fridge and use within 4-5 weeks.

# Housing

Chickens need a well ventilated, and **well drained pen** with a covered area for protection from the weather and for nesting and roosting. Place the back of the enclosed part of the house against prevailing weather, and provide adequate shade so the chickens don't get overly hot, they do not have a cooling mechanism. Ensure that they have fresh cool water in summer.

Nesting boxes that are at least 35cm by 35cm, need to be off the ground, but lower than the roosting area. Nesting boxes should be in a dark, secure area to promote laying. Stressed birds are less likely to lay. The roosting area should be off the ground and higher than the nesting boxes otherwise the hens may roost in and foul the nests. The roosting area can be a flat platform or wide strips of wood (at least 3cm wide) for them to perch on. Hens toilet at night so place the perching area where they won't foul anything under neath.

A concrete floor with a bit of a fall to a drain will make hosing the area down easier and **keep the pen well drained and dry**. Dirt floors can also be used, just put a thick layer of fine woodchip down, after several months depending on the amount of poo you will have a magnificent compost. *Chicken manure is great but very strong so be careful not to apply it too thickly or close to stems as it can damage your plants.*

**The chickens Boylans Produce have available are popular, robust and reliable layers.**

**Place your order with staff. If they are out of stock staff will contact you when they arrive.**

# Handling Your Chicken

Chickens don't like being caught, but if done when young they will get used to it. Get close to the chicken and carry a food bucket to entice her to you. Manoeuvre the chicken into a tight corner. Put a hand on her back to stop her from flying up and the other hand underneath to gently hold the legs together. Avoid grabbing by the legs as their feet are very delicate. To hold the chicken securely, rest the weight of the bird on your arm and tuck the head under your armpit which will help to calm the bird down and stop the wings flapping. Hold the legs underneath with your fingers. **Chickens are much more docile when caught in the dark.**

Children will love holding young birds, sit them down first and have them lightly hold it, making sure they don't give the chick a squeeze, as it will hurt her.