



## Chicken

Chickens and ducks can live anywhere from 5-10 years depending on the quality of life provided. Most hens stop laying eggs around 3 years of age. Your new chicken or duck will require a lot of care in the first 4 weeks. After 4 weeks of age, they can move from their baby box to their adult cage. Be sure to check if these pets are legal in your city. This care sheet covers only basic care guidelines. Please contact your local feed store for more detailed instructions.

### Housing

For the first 4 weeks, provide a draft free shallow wooden box with a screened lid. For maximum comfort, line the box with pine shavings about one inch deep. This should be changed daily or as needed when wet. Warmth is the key to keeping your chicken or duck happy and healthy. Temperatures should be at about 90-95 degrees for the first week and lowered by 5 degrees each week until they are 4 weeks old. The temperature should be controlled by a 250 watt bulb hung over the screened lid at about 18 inches above the lid. If your chicken or duck seems to hang out by the heat source, try moving the bulb closer to the screen for more warmth. And vice versa, if they hang out away from the heat source, move the bulb farther from the screen so it is not too hot. They should have any area away from the heat source they can go to if they get too hot. By 4 weeks old they no longer need the warmth provided by a bulb. They are now ready to roam around outside and have access to their adult cage with sleeping quarters. Keep your chicken or duck in the sleeping quarters (preferably with a door) at night away from drafts and predators. Your cage can be made out of mesh or wire but be sure that 1/2 the cage has a solid floor for protecting their feet (a piece of wood works well).

### Food

Feed your chicken or duck starter crumbles found at any local feed store. When bringing home a new chicken or duck, they will be stressed from the handling and may exhibit signs of dehydration and weakness. To reduce the amount of stress on your new pet, dip their beak

lightly in water to help them find their water bowl faster. For quick energy, try 1 tablespoon of sugar in the bowl of water. You can also add water soluble vitamins and electrolytes to their water. As your birds get bigger they will require a change in diet from a starter diet to a growth diet. They may also require different diets during their molting periods or laying periods. Always provide easy access to water and grit which helps in the digestion of their food.

grooming - There is no need to give your chicken or duck a bath. When you first bring them home they may be encrusted with some dirt, try gently rubbing the dirt with a warm towel. Make sure that you completely dry your pet off and keep them warm.

### **Health**

Common problems can include upper respiratory infections and impaction. If your pet has an infection this can be treated by your vet with antibiotics. Symptoms include; runny eyes and nose or crust eyes and nose. If your pet is impacted you can try a home treatment of soaking the bottom area in warm water and gently massaging the impaction out. If this does not work, you must take your pet to the vet. Your hen may also stop laying during the molting period. Not to worry, when she is done she will resume laying again. You can try feeding breeder crumbles to help this process along.

### **Dangers**

Dogs, cats, coyotes, and hawks. Be sure to keep an eye on your pet whenever they are roaming free in the yard. It is also not a good idea to keep two chickens together, unless they are the same age and size because the bigger of the two will peck the other causing injury.