



# Yardbirds Backyard Chickens

## Backyard Chickens 101 with The Chickeness, Khrysti Smyth

WEB: [www.YardbirdsBackyardChickens.com](http://www.YardbirdsBackyardChickens.com), BLOG: [TheChickeness.blogspot.com](http://TheChickeness.blogspot.com)

**I. Why chickens? And general chicken info** - South Asian Jungle Fowl (*Gallus gallus domesticus*); "Chicken" = Hen or Rooster/Cock if >1yr, Pullet or Cockerel if <1yr; Bantam (small) vs. Standard/Large Fowl; No roosters needed!

### II. Breeds and sourcing

- a. Priorities: Temperament, production, egg color, bird appearance, "Hardiness"
- b. Sources - Mail order, local events, local breeders and hobbyists, MSPCA, or from me!
- c. **YBC favorites:** Plymouth rocks, ameraucanas, marans, Rhode Island reds, orpingtons, bantam cochins, old English gamebirds, New Hampshire reds, speckled Sussex, golden comets, crested cream legbars, black sex links... and more!
- d. **Not YBC recommended for a 1<sup>st</sup>-time chicken owner** (based on our experience)
  - i. wyandottes/australorps (too dominant for a small, confined flock)
  - ii. leghorns and other light-bodied breeds (generally very skittish and shy)
  - iii. silkies/frizzles and polish (not impossible, but can be tricky for a 1<sup>st</sup> timer!)

BREED NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Chick care

- a. Temperature!
  - i. 90-95 deg for first week, lower by 5 degrees/week after
  - ii. Watch their behavior
- b. Food/water
  - i. Starter until ~6wks, or starter/grower; grower until they start laying ~5-6mos
  - ii. Chick-sized waterer, and show them where it is by dipping their beak in it
  - iii. Grit before any other foods
  - iv. Medicated vs. non (feed non-med feed if they were vaccinated for Coccidiosis)
- c. Brooder setup
  - i. Size vs. age
  - ii. Bedding
  - iii. "Stage" platform for water/feed
  - iv. Heating logistics - want to be able to move heater to adjust temp
- d. Issues to watch for
  - i. "Pasty butt" - dried poop, will need to be cleaned off
  - ii. Vaccines - get Marek's vaccine if at all possible

CHICK CARE NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### IV. General care and health

- a. **Feeding and daily care** = good housing, food (16% protein), + clean water, and observe daily. Garden greens, kitchen scraps, treats all great – nothing rotting or moldy.
- b. **Injury and disease** –
  - i. Chickens hide illness - find a vet BEFORE you need one (even if you think you won't)
  - ii. Be prepared! Have a **quarantine cage** and a **flock first aid kit** with: **Burts' Bees Res-Q ointment** or a triple antibiotic ointment (WITHOUT pain meds), **VetRx for poultry**, **Poly-Vi-Sol baby vitamins** (without iron), **Pedialyte**, Chicken-and-veggies **baby food** (stage 2), **"cat" nail trimmers and syptic powder** (to stop bleeding don't skip this if you're planning to trim nails yourself!), **UltraCare mite and lice bird spray**, **Small scissors**.

CARE NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

#### V. Housing and laws - In our experience with over 100 coops and 1000+ birds, we have concluded that good coop/run design can prevent 95% of potential headaches!

- a. Laws and zoning – know what they are, and be considerate of neighbors
- b. Coop = outdoor "run" (12-15 sq ft/bird) and indoor "house" (2.5 sq ft/bird)
- c. IMPT: Pest/predators, size/shape per #birds, zoning, and planning ahead for winter.
- d. Pre-fab or DIY = time vs. money vs. quality
- e. **YBC's recommendations:**
  - i. Rain-proof roof over house (dark) AND run (light/clear)
  - ii. Location with really good drainage/dry ground
  - iii. Walk-in run so you can comfortably hang out in there
  - iv. House access door large enough to *easily* access the entire inside for cleaning
  - v. "Gap-free construction" plus ½" hardware cloth for pest/predator prevention
  - vi. PLENTY of ventilation for summer and NO cross-breeze drafts for winter
  - vii. More space almost always = better! (aka build as big as you can from the start)
  - viii. Other general tips – pine shavings for everything in the house (no straw/hay); ~3:1 dirt-to-sand in the run; interior nestboxes (1 per 3 birds; min of 2); 8" of roosting space/bird (no roosts w/in pecking distance of others); and lots more... email with any questions!

COOP NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### VI. Additional References

- a. **YBC!** Visit [www.yardbirdsbackyardchickens.com](http://www.yardbirdsbackyardchickens.com) and/or [thechickeness.blogspot.com](http://thechickeness.blogspot.com), and "like" and "follow" Yardbirds Backyard Chickens on FB or Instagram
- b. BYC forum - [www.backyardchickens.com](http://www.backyardchickens.com) or [www.mypetchicken.com](http://www.mypetchicken.com)

#### VII. **Thanks!** Thank you for attending our class! Please feel free to contact me by email if you have any further questions or would like to do a consultation at [TheChickeness@gmail.com](mailto:TheChickeness@gmail.com).

If you learned something useful today and you'd like to support YBC and SEMAP, you are welcome to do so via [www.SEMAPonline.org/donate](http://www.SEMAPonline.org/donate)

THANK YOU and Happy Chickening!