

## City Chicken Project Frequently Asked Questions



### **How do I connect with other chicken keepers and find out about events, workshops and meet ups?**

Join the Just Food City Chicken Meetup NYC group online!  
<http://www.meetup.com/Just-Food-City-Chicken-Meetup-NYC>

### **How many hens can I keep in NYC?**

You can raise as many hens (female chickens) as you want – there are no New York City regulations that limit the number of non-prohibited pets (including hens) that one may keep. However, the more chickens you have, the more likely you are to offend your neighbors with noise, smells, flies or vermin. Legally, you may not allow your hens to create these conditions.

### **Do I have to worry about what my neighbors think?**

Yes. Keep your coop clean! If your neighbors notice nuisance conditions (foul smells, flies, vermin, and/or excessive noise) coming from your property, you could get in trouble. If your neighbors complain to the city, Department of Health inspectors will be sent out to take a look at your chickens. If they find that your chickens are creating a nuisance condition, they will fine you between \$200 and \$2000, increasing with repeat violations.

Talk to your neighbors! Before you build a coop and start a chicken project, let your neighbors know what's going on. Let them know what to expect, that you've researched the city codes, that you plan to keep them clean, that they can call you directly if they get too noisy or see a problem, and that they can expect some fresh eggs coming their way every now and then!

### **Can I keep roosters?**

No. Roosters (male chickens) are illegal in NYC. Geese, ducks, turkeys and peafowl are also illegal in NYC.

### **Will my hens lay eggs without a rooster?**

Yes. Hens will lay eggs without a rooster. However, hens will not lay fertilized eggs without roosters, so the eggs will not hatch baby chicks.

### **How much space do hens need?**

Give your hens at least 2-4 square feet each in their henhouse, and at least 4 square feet each in their run. The more space that you give them outdoors for their daily pecking, foraging, and dusting, the less space they will need in their henhouse. Some recommend giving hens as much as 10 square feet within the henhouse. For 6 hens, a 4' x 8' coop and 4' x 8' run would be very comfortable. For 18 hens, a 4' x 8' coop would only be comfortable if the hens had a very large run that they could use every day of the year (think at least 10' x 10'). If too many hens are cooped up in a small henhouse, the hens

will be unhealthy and bad habits will start, such as egg eating and cannibalism (pecking each other endlessly).



#### **How much time does hen-keeping take?**

You should expect to visit your flock at least twice a day every day of the year to collect eggs, and provide fresh, clean water and food. You may need to clean the coop once a week, especially in the warmer months, which will include clearing out manure mixed with hay/straw, and/or adding more clean hay/straw. About once a month, you may need to get new straw, chicken feed, grit and scratch. Allow time to check for signs of rodents and flies and to make any repairs to the coop.

#### **How can I make my hens happy?**

Know what hens love to do and give them that lifestyle. Hens enjoy pecking and scratching at the soil, looking for worms and bugs and creepy crawly things – give them a big run in the garden, and/or move them around the garden with a smaller moveable pen (a.k.a. chicken tractor <http://home.centurytel.net/thecitychicken/tractors.html>). They like to take dust baths in the soil to cool down and kill their mites – give them access to soil. They like to eat fresh snacks, like weeds and vegetable/fruit scraps from your kitchen. They wouldn't mind playing with a dangling sunflower head that you put into their play area. They like company – don't just keep one or two hens! They like to sleep in branches at night, so provide perches (you can make these from old branches or from wooden dowels). They like to lay eggs in safe dark places that are raised a little off the ground – so build nesting boxes appropriately.

#### **Where can I get hens, feed, and other supplies?**

See the next page for sources. You can also order from online sources.

#### **What should I feed my hens?**

Feed your hens a balanced diet of a variety of foods, including prepared balanced feed from a feed store (with the right amount of protein for your hens) as well as weeds, kitchen scraps, and bugs/worms/slugs from the garden. To strengthen their egg shells, hens will also need a source of calcium (finely crushed oyster shells or egg shells). They will also need grit (finely crushed pebbles) to grind up their food. Hens will find grit naturally in the soil, or you can order it from a feed store. The richest most delicious eggs come from hens that eat plenty of bugs and greens from the garden.

#### **How many eggs will I get?**

For the first couple of years, a mature hen will lay two eggs every three days. If you have three hens, you will get about two eggs every day. Six hens will lay four eggs every day. 18 hens will lay a dozen. In the winter egg production will slow and may stop altogether. As hens get older they continue to lay, but less often. Some hens lay until they are five or ten years old!

#### **How do I keep other animals from eating my hens?**

In NYC, raccoons, possums, hawks and falcons often kill chickens. Some dogs will also attack chickens, and baby chicks can be attacked by cats and rats as well. To protect your

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hens, you should build a sturdy predator-proof coop that a toddler could not get into. Raccoons are smart and able to get into any space that a young child could. We bury our chicken wire underneath the entire run, and enclose the sides and top of the run with chicken wire as well. Feed your hens in the henhouse and lock them in the house at night to keep predators and feed-thieves away.



**Do chicken coops smell bad?**

No. Your chicken coop will only smell if you do not regularly clean their coop. Do not keep more hens than you can clean up after. Keep a good supply of straw. If you smell something, clean something.