

Frequently Asked Questions

Are hens noisy to keep? Cockerels can be noisy, the hens are much quieter. They are silent when it is dark and they are fast asleep. During the day they might make the occasional cackling sound or the odd squawk. They make a little cackling sound when they lay an egg but certainly not the sort of noise that would cause a nuisance.

Can I keep chickens in my garden? In rare cases there might be local restrictions but you can easily check by telephoning your local Council. Even the smallest garden has room for at least 2 or 3 chickens.

How many eggs does one hen lay? This depends on the time of year; the breed of the hen; the diet of the hen; the age of the hen and how the hen is looked after. Most of the hybrid breeds of chickens will lay around 320 eggs per year for although pure breeds lay less at between 150-250 depending on breed.

Do you have to have a cockerel to get eggs? Luckily no, because cockerels are pretty noisy so no early morning wake-up calls! Hens will happily lay eggs without a cockerel, though of course they won't be fertilised and so would never hatch into little chicks (and yes, you can eat fertilised eggs too).

Do hens eat worms and insects? Oh yes they do – they love them, it is a great way to keep many unwanted pests out of your garden (but stop using slug pellets!). They will also eat your weeds too...

How long do hens live? Chickens can live between 5 - 12 years depending on the breed and how they are cared for. The record is about 21 years old!

What about Foxes? Whether using an enclosed run or electric netting, you are really keeping foxes and other predators out, rather than the chickens in. Chickens don't normally 'run off' if they get the chance as they quickly learn where their home is and will happily stay within a close area. Foxes are the main problem you can face keeping hens, but here are some handy hints;

- Men's wee (urine) around the perimeter of your garden really helps to keep foxes away - foxes hate humans and our smell scares them. Best to do this at night of course, and lasts for a month or two between 'top ups'.
- Human hair - tied in an old stocking at gaps of about 6-10 feet apart, but 8 inches from the ground, again around the perimeter of your garden helps keep foxes away.

What do you feed them? Best to feed a good quality layers pellet, allow hens access to this all day if possible. Feed treats in the late afternoon. Hens eat most things, but we never feed ours any meat.

They enjoy corn, but we find their favourites treats include:

- Pasta and rice
- Seafood
- Vegetables and peelings (but cook potatoes and their peelings)
- Spicy hot foods
- Split maize – good for yellow yolks
- Stale bread (not with mould)
- Stale cereals and biscuits
- They are also a good way to dispose of snails and slugs you find in the garden!