

Autumn Hens and Egg Laying!

Point of lay hens are young hens that are about to start producing eggs anywhere between 16 and 26 weeks of age. The hen must reach sexual maturity to start producing eggs and during the Spring and Summer this should naturally occur quite quickly, once they are roaming in the garden. However, when you buy point of lay hens in the Autumn/Winter, the number of daylight hours is steadily reducing and that will delay the hens starting to lay eggs. This is because it is the sunlight that activates the birds to become sexually active by stimulating the anterior lobe which is located in the pituitary gland of their brain. This causes the bird to produce a hormone that increases the activity of the bird's sex glands, which in turn triggers the hen to start laying eggs (or even increasing egg production of older hens).

How to encourage hens to come into lay:

The easiest way to bring the young hens into lay is by putting a light in their coup. A small light connected to a timer that turns on at 5am and goes off at 8am is sufficient. Leave this in place from October until the first week of February and young hens will quickly start to lay. Older hens will often start laying over the Winter too.

Here are the things you will need:

- **Light holder £3**



- **Bulb: Something like a 9W (60W) LED Bayonet Light Bulb in Warm White £2**



- **Plug in timer £3.50**



Vitamin D and UV Light:

Vitamin D is a very important part of the human diet and eggs are a great natural source of Vitamin D. But recent research has shown that hens can lay eggs with 4 times the amount of Vitamin D by placing a UV light in their coup. It was found that 6 hours UV light a day was sufficient to produce the massive increase in the vitamin D content of eggs – something to think about!

