



K-State Extension Connection

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The mission of K-State Research and Extension Family and Consumer Sciences is to link education with life experiences to help people improve their lives, their families and their communities. Family and Consumer Sciences professionals support essential life skills including Community Development, Healthy Lifestyle Choices, Leadership & Volunteer Development, Relationship Development and Resource Management.

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Title: "Poultry 101: Basic Principles for Your Backyard Flock to be Held in Girard

Spring is in the air and that inspires folks to start a garden. However, if you are like me, you might be thinking about starting chicks instead. Historically, it seems everyone had a few hens scratching around in their yards to provide eggs and meat. Though that scene is not as common as it once was, if you want it to be a part of your view, consider starting your own flock. Wildcat Extension District of Crawford, Labette, and Montgomery counties will be hosting an evening program:

Poultry 101
Thursday, March 26th, 6:30 PM
Girard High School Vo-Ag Building
West Cedar Street

Topics including poultry nutrition, housing needs, management, resources, and varmint control will be covered. A live bird processing demonstration will also be held. To register for this event, please contact the Girard Extension office at 620-724-8233.

Of course, before establishing a backyard chicken flock, do your research. Check local laws and homeowners' association covenants. Rules vary significantly from town to town. Chickens are not allowed to be raised within some city limits. The number of chickens, distance from property lines, and type of house may be defined in local regulations.

Poultry may carry bacteria such as Salmonella and Campylobacter that can cause illness to you and your family. Infected birds do not usually appear to be sick and baby chicks may be especially prone to shed these microorganisms. Even eggs with clean, uncracked shells may occasionally contain bacteria. While anyone can become ill from exposure to these microorganisms, the risk of infection is especially high for children, pregnant women, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems. If small children handle eggs, always supervise hand washing afterwards.

When choosing to raise chickens there are several things to consider ensuring safe, home-produced chicken eggs.

Caring for the Flock

- Maintaining the flock in an enclosed coop is often a local requirement and will help protect the flock from predators and make egg collecting easier.
- Eggs will stay cleaner if the coop area is kept clean and dry. Maintain floor litter in good condition. Thoroughly clean and disinfect the shed at least twice a year. Obtain an approved disinfectant from your feed store and apply according to directions.
- Allow one nest for every three to four chickens and make sure nests are large enough for your hens. To protect eggs, pad nests with hay or wood chips. Clean out nest boxes once a week to remove dirty litter and manure and replace with clean nesting material.
- Allow adequate nest space and plenty of clean nesting material to help to ensure clean eggs and limit egg breakage.
- Provide a perch above the floor over a dropping box away from the nests. Chickens will roost on the perch to sleep and defecate into the wire-mesh covered dropping box.

Caring for the Eggs

Collect the eggs often. Eggs that spend more time in the nest have an increased chance of becoming dirty, broken, or lower in quality. Collecting eggs at least twice daily is recommended, preferably before noon.

Cleaning

Dirty eggs can be a health hazard. Eggs with dirt and debris can be cleaned with a nylon scrubber. If eggs need to be washed, the temperature of the water should be at least 20F warmer than the egg. This will prevent the egg contents from contracting and producing a vacuum. It will also prevent microscopic bacteria from being pulled by vacuum through the pores of the egg. A mild,

non-foaming, unscented detergent approved for washing eggs can be used. A dishwashing liquid that is free of scents and dyes is acceptable.

Storage

Store eggs in the main section of the refrigerator at 35F to 40F; the shelves in the door tend to be warmer than interior shelves. If collected and stored properly, eggs can have a safe shelf life of greater than three weeks. Date the storage carton or container and use older eggs first.

Preparation

Never eat eggs raw. Undercooked egg whites and yolks have been associated with foodborne illness. To prevent illness from bacteria, cook eggs until yolks are firm and cook foods containing eggs thoroughly to 160F. Use a food thermometer to be sure. Do not keep cooked or raw eggs at room temperature for more than two hours.

Caring for Yourself

- Always wash your hands with soap and water after handling eggs, chickens, or anything in their environment.
- Do not wash feed and water dishes from the chicken shed in the kitchen sink.

Selling Eggs

In Kansas, small egg producers (fewer than 250 hens) are exempt from licensing requirements as long as the eggs are sold directly to the final consumer of the eggs. If the eggs are sold to restaurants, stores, commercial establishments or another egg distributor, then an Egg Producer/Dealer License is required.

Source: Colorado State University, Extension, Fact Sheet No.9.377, Food and Nutrition Series Food Safety by M. Bunning and J. Avens

For questions or additional information please call:

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