



THE STOCK TANK

YOUR MONTHLY LIVESTOCK NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2021 • SPRING ISSUE



PICKING UP CHICKS: A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR PURCHASING YOUR SPRING CHICKENS

BY KENDRA FORTNER

Typically, I use my monthly article to discuss the larger livestock species that we deal with such as cattle, sheep, and goats. This month I decided to cover one of the species that often gets overlooked where livestock is concerned because it is much different than our 4-legged beasts. Chickens have much different space and shelter requirements and therefore require different care. This is the time of year when a lot of people decide to head out to their local farm store and pick out some cute and fluffy chicks, a lot of whom do not consider the long-term requirements or the immediate care and space that those chicks will require. No one wants to be the person that ends up regretting spending that money six months down the road because they no longer have room for their (now much larger) chickens, and have no way of using all the eggs they are getting, and no interest in selling eggs. In an effort to try to avoid that scenario, let us discuss some of the items that you want to consider before purchasing chicks.

Do your homework first! If you have made it this far in this article then you are on your way. Find out if your place of residence comes with restrictive ordinances or covenants, if you live in town or in a development this will be more of a concern. Some home owners associations have restrictions on the number of birds you can have and possibly even restrict having roosters. You should also evaluate your ability to

WHAT'S INSIDE

Featured Article: Picking Up Chicks:
A How-To Guide For Purchasing Your
Spring Chickens

For the Cattle Producer:

Upcoming Events and News

provide the daily food, water, clean dry shelter, and being able to gather/use/sell/give away eggs. Please, do not get more chickens than the number of eggs you can take care of. Where eggs production is concerned, young hens or pullets usually begin laying between 16 and 24 weeks of age depending on breed and conditions. Hens, on average, will produce around two eggs every three days, up to 15 dozen during their first laying year. After this production will slowly decline. Flocks should also be started and/or expanded with vaccinated birds from reputable sources. Knowing your ability to provide the necessary care is a step in helping you determine how many birds you should keep.

When selecting your chickens (how many and what breed) first, consider the size of the available area you have for a coop and run. You should allow on average a minimum of 2.5-3.5 square feet per bird inside the weather-tight coop and an additional minimum of 4-5 square feet per bird in the fenced outside run area. Where nesting boxes are concerned, you will need at least one box that is 12 inches by 14 inches, for every 4-5 hens, which will be adequate for any breed. Determining the breed of chickens that you want can be complicated at times because there are lots of determining factors and personal preferences at play. If collecting slightly less than an egg a day, per hen, and you would prefer hardy hens that produce regularly over a longer period of their lives you may benefit from considering some of the heritage breeds. For example, Barred Rocks and Rhode Island Reds, to name a couple. If your goal is maximum egg production and you don't mind having hens with shorter productive lives then you may consider a commercial breed such as Leghorns. If you want hens that are both considered high production and can be used for stewing meat then consider the dual purpose breeds such as Plymouth Rocks, Rhode Island Reds, New Hampshires, Sussex, or Wyandottes.



HANDLING FACILITIES

BY KENDRA FORTNER

Summer is just around the corner and with summer cattle producers will be managing flies, deworming, and may even be considering other vaccinations as part of their herd management program. These things got me thinking about cattle handling facilities. With good management practices comes a requirement to work cattle several times throughout the year, and I can't tell you how many times I have heard producers say the reason why they don't implement these best management practices is because they don't have an adequate handling facility. I can't say whether this is because the thought of choosing a design that best fits their operation or if it's the cost associated with building a facility that is overwhelming. However, I can say that this is where Cooperative Extension can help.

First off, we have an impressive amount of equipment available to producers to rent for various lengths of time which include a squeeze chute, corral system, Artificial Insemination cage attachment, and portable scales. We have several producers who have utilized this equipment and have had great things to say about it. This allows the producers to basically skip the process of planning a working facility design and footing the bill to build it.

This also allows producers to be able to see and use these pieces of equipment to see what they do and do not like about them before purchasing one of their own. Cooperative Extension is also available to help walk producers through the steps of planning and designing a handling facility to best meet their needs.

One thing we must not skip is reminding producers who already have a handling facility to walk through that facility at least a couple times a year to make sure that it is safe to work cattle through. This means making sure the footing is adequate so that animals are not slipping and/or falling while being handled. Also, checking for loose boards, screws, or nails which could result in injury to the animals or operators. As producers these best management practices that we can implement with the help of a handling facility can go a long way with the peace of mind of consumers knowing that their beef is being raised in a healthy manner. For more information about cattle handling facilities, design, or renting equipment producers can contact Kendra Fortner at the Jackson County Cooperative Extension Office



UPCOMING LIVESTOCK EVENTS

Beef Breeds Spotlights - 2nd Wednesday of each month. Available on our Facebook page.

Weed ID Wednesdays- 3rd Wednesday of each month beginning in March and ending in September. Available on our Facebook page.

Content Videos- 3rd Thursday of each month. Available on our Facebook page.

Livestock Producers Monthly Meeting: Second Tuesday each month @ 5:30pm at the Jackson County Extension Office. (NO JUNE MEETING) Seating is limited. Please call 828-586-4009 to reserve your seat.

Spring Livestock Update: Friday, June 4th at the WNC Regional Livestock Center, Canton, NC. Morning hours will be for Small Ruminant Producers, Afternoon hours will be for Cattle Producers. Please see the included flyer for registration information and details.



On Facebook at: NC Cooperative Extension-Swain County

Online at: swain.ces.ncsu.edu

Your Livestock Extension Agent: Kendra Fortner

kendra_norton@ncsu.edu

828.488.3848

N.C. Cooperative Extension prohibits discrimination and harassment regardless of age, color, disability, family and marital status, gender identity, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation and veteran status. NC State University, N.C. A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and local governments cooperating.

Swain County Center
60 Almond School Rd
Bryson City, NC 28713



THE STOCK TANK • LIVESTOCK NEWSLETTER

