



THE STOCK TANK

YOUR MONTHLY LIVESTOCK NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2024 • SPRING ISSUE



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WITH EARLY EASTER COMES LOTS OF FEATHERED FARM FRIENDS

BY KENDRA FORTNER

This year Easter is coming early, with Easter and Spring, we typically start talking about new farm animals, such as chickens, rabbits, and ducks. As a general rule these smaller species have much different space requirements than larger livestock 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 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.

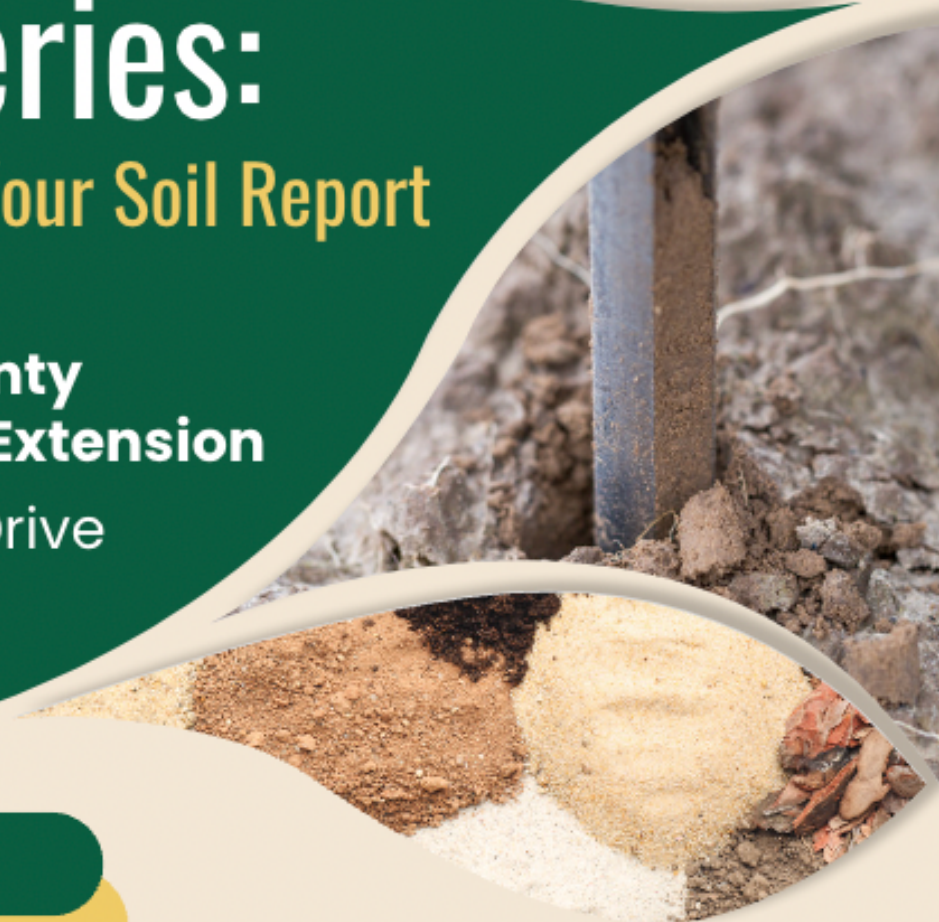
Soils Series:

Soil Health & Your Soil Report



**Jackson County
Cooperative Extension**

876 Skyland Drive
Sylva, NC



MARCH 25

5 PM – 6 PM

Why Soil Health is
So Important



*COME TO PICKUP YOUR
FREE SOIL TEST KITS*

APRIL 22

5 PM – 6 PM

Understanding
What Soil Test
Results Mean
for You

Registration Required • Space is Limited (1st come, 1st serve) • RSVP by the week before to reserve your seat.

(828) 586-4009

jackson.ces.ncsu.edu



REGISTER HERE

Minda Daughtry, Extension Horticulture Agent
Kendra Fortner, Extension Livestock Agent



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UPCOMING LIVESTOCK EVENTS

Soils Series: Soil Health & Your Soil Report Part 1

Monday, March 25 from 5:30pm- 6:30pm at the Jackson County Cooperative Extension Center. 876 Skyland Dr., Sylva, NC 28779. See included flyer for details.

Swain 4-H Pullet Project Info/Interest Meeting

Thursday, April 4 from 5:30pm- 6:30pm at the Swain County Cooperative Extension Center. 60 Almond School Rd., Bryson City, NC, 28713 Registration is required. Call 828-488-3848 for more details.

Soils Series: Soil Health & Your Soil Report Part 2

Monday, April 22 from 5:30pm- 6:30pm at the Jackson County Cooperative Extension Center. 876 Skyland Dr., Sylva, NC 28779. See included flyer for details.

Taco Thursday Fundraiser for The Swain County Agricultural Fair

May 2nd See Included Flyer for details
Pre-Orders Only by April 26th @ 5PM

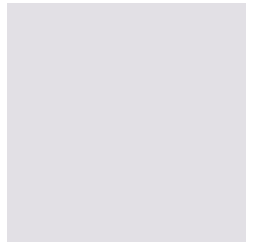


On Facebook at: NC Cooperative Extension-Swain County
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Swain County Center
60 Almond School Rd
Bryson City, NC 28713



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