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Feeding Chickens - What You Need to Know

Chickens Require More Than Just Scratch



A chickens' needs are relatively simple; the term 'chicken feed' is not used as a common colloquialism for nothing.

However, if you are new to chicken rearing, then there may be some things that you should learn about a chicken's nutritional requirements.

It is possible for chickens to survive on scraps of 'human food'. However, if you want your birds to be healthy and produce good quality eggs, then chickens must get the nutrition that they require.

That said, I must stress that the food that a chicken requires to remain healthy is really very simple. I will discuss some of the basic rules to keeping chickens healthy with the right diet. This guide does not cover watering but fresh, clean water must be provided daily and the easiest way is by using an [automatic chicken waterer](#).

The three things that chickens need are:

- **Grains**
- **Greens**
- **Protein**

Yes, that really is it. Grain is, obviously, easy to get hold of and feed to your birds. However, you may like to bear in mind that living grains are healthier than cracked and a mixture of grains is typically better for your birds than a simple corn feed and it is called [chicken scratch](#).

In the spring and summer, it is extremely easy to ensure that your chickens are getting enough greens, because they are constantly pecking the grass. During the autumn and winter, or if you feel that your birds are not getting enough grass, you can offer them weeds and/or fresh vegetable leftovers from your kitchen.

As far as protein is concerned, for the majority of the time, chickens will acquire their own protein through eating small bugs that can be found in the grass.

However, over the winter, when bugs are not so prevalent, you may need to provide your birds with a protein supplement. For example, soya, milk, sea fish, meat and worms are all excellent sources of protein. If your birds are free range, that is all they need with the exception of a fresh supply of water.

On the other hand, if your birds are kept in a coop they will need some extra nutrients to ensure their health and wellbeing.

If your birds are not free range, consider also supplying them with:

- **Grit (not to be confused with oyster shell or calcium)**

- Calcium
- Vitamins A and D
- Salt (best offered as kelp, as it provides all necessary minerals)

In terms of how to feed chickens, it is wise to bear in mind that they will not venture far to find food or water. Remember, when laying, they will need plenty of water and food, so ensure that both are positioned close to the entrance of their coop.

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