

DOMESTIC CHICKEN

updated March 2017



Range	Various species of chicken are kept all over the world by humans, who consume their meat and eggs
Habitat	Domesticated
Diet (wild)	N/A
Diet (captivity)	Omnivorous, feasting on seeds, and other substances called “scratch” and “layer feed.” Layer feed is a food that generally comes in pellet or crumble form. Scratch consists of a mix of different grains and seeds, which gives the chickens an assortment of vitamins and minerals.
Description	Roosters can be differentiated from hens by their plumage, long flowing tails and shiny, pointed feathers on their necks (hackles) and backs (saddles), which are typically brighter in color than those of females of the same species. Adult chickens have a fleshy crest on their heads called a comb, or cockscomb, and hanging flaps of skin either side under their beaks called wattles. Both adult males and females have wattles and combs, but in most breeds these are more prominent in males. Domestic chickens are not capable of long distance flight, although lighter birds are generally capable of flying for short distances.
Lifespan	5–10 years
Reproduction	Hens will try to lay in nests that already contain eggs and have been known to move eggs from neighboring nests into their own. Some farmers use fake eggs made from plastic or stone (or golf balls) to encourage hens to lay in a particular location. The result of this behavior is that a flock will use only a few preferred locations, rather than having a different nest for every bird. To initiate courting, some roosters may dance in a circle around or near a hen (“a circle dance”), often lowering his wing which is closest to the hen. When the hen responds to his “call,” the rooster may mount the hen and proceed with the fertilization.
Behavior	Chickens live together in flocks. They have a communal approach to the incubation of eggs and raising of young. Individual chickens in a flock will dominate over others, establishing a “pecking order,” with dominant individuals having priority for food access and nesting locations. Removing hens or roosters from a flock causes a temporary disruption to this social order until a new pecking order is established. Roosters crow as a territorial signal to other roosters. Chickens also give a low “warning call” when a predator is approaching.
Our animals	Several of various ages, all female
Cool stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chickens were first domesticated from the red junglefowl (<i>Gallus gallus</i>) in southeast Asia 10,000 years ago. • There are more chickens in the world than any other species of bird. More than 50 billion chickens are reared annually as a source of food, for both meat and eggs. • Ancient Romans also used chickens to foretell the future. For example, a flying chicken approaching from the left was considered good luck. • An average chicken can recognize and remember more than 100 other chickens. • Roosters are very solicitous of their hens. When he finds food, a rooster will stand aside while his hens enjoy their treat and only after they've enjoyed their fill will the rooster sample the food.

Phylum
ChordataClass
AvesOrder
GalliformesFamily
PhasianidaeGenus
Gallusspecies
G. gallus domesticus