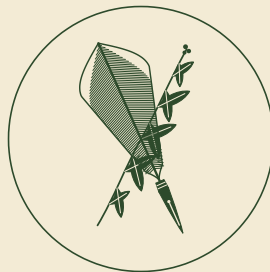


A RUTH PEMBERTON BACKYARD FLOCK GUIDE

Backyard Flock Starter Kit

Five printables to choose breeds, build right &
raise a healthy first flock — your free companion
to *Raising Backyard Chickens for Beginners*.

10 BEGINNER BREEDS AT A GLANCE · COOP & RUN CARD
DAILY & WEEKLY CARE RHYTHM · YOUR FIRST FLOCK
EGG & LAY LOG



THE ALMANAC HOUSE · AN IMPRINT OF CONFLUENCE MEDIA GROUP

10 Beginner Breeds at a Glance

The ten standard-size, mostly cold-hardy, mostly docile-to-calm birds the book builds a first flock from. Read every breed for the same six things — *size, eggs, color, broodiness, temperament*. Build a first flock from any six.

BREED	ADULT SIZE	EGGS / YEAR	EGG COLOR	BROODINESS	TEMPERAMENT
Buff Orpington	7-8 lb	180-220	Brown	Broody every spring	Docile
Plymouth Rock (Barred Rock)	6-7 lb	200-280	Brown	—	Calm
Australorp	6-8 lb	250-300	Brown	Rarely broody	Calm
Easter Egger	Varies	200-260	Blue-green-pink	—	Friendly
Welsummer	5-6 lb	160-200	Dark-chocolate speckled	—	Active, alert
Rhode Island Red	6-7 lb	250-300	Brown	—	Assertive
Wyandotte (rose comb)	6-7 lb	180-240	Brown	—	Calm
Sussex	6-7 lb	200-250	Cream-pale brown	—	Very friendly
Marans	6-7 lb	150-200	Dark chocolate	—	Calm
Leghorn (mention only)	5-6 lb	280-320	White	—	Flighty

● *Leghorn is a mention-only: highest production on the page, but flighty and dislikes handling — skip her in year one unless white eggs are specifically what you came for. Skip these three in year one too: Silkie, Polish, and bantams in a mixed flock. None are bad birds; they just aren't first-flock birds.*



The Four Numbers — Coop & Run

There are four numbers that decide whether a coop works. Memorize these — every other coop decision sits on top of them. Then build the run that keeps the flock alive.

THE FOUR NUMBERS

4 sq ft

PER BIRD, INSIDE THE COOP

Minimum interior floor with daily run access. Six birds need 24+ sq ft; bump to 5–6 where winters confine the flock.

10 sq ft

PER BIRD, IN THE RUN

The working minimum — double it if you can. Six birds need 60+ sq ft, or you get mud and pecking-order conflict.

1 box

NESTING BOX PER 4 HENS

Build the formula number, then accept they'll crowd the one favorite box and ignore the rest.

8–12 in

ROOST SPACE PER BIRD

Set the roost *higher* than the nesting boxes, or the hens sleep in — and foul — the boxes.

VENTILATION — THE ONE MOST COOPS GET WRONG

Vent area should be roughly **10% of the coop's floor area** at minimum — open eave vents up high, on two opposing walls, covered with hardware cloth, year-round. Vents up high; walls solid at roost level. Drafts at bird level cause frostbite.

THE RUN — WHAT KEEPS THE FLOCK ALIVE

Use **½-inch, 19-gauge hardware cloth** — never chicken wire, which keeps birds in but nothing out. Add a **predator apron** (buried or flared, at least 12 in out, 24 better) and a **covered top** against hawks. No breed is a flock guardian; this is.

● *Those four numbers, applied honestly, eliminate most coop problems a first-year keeper runs into. The morning test: if the coop smells sharply of ammonia or the ceiling is wet, ventilation is undersized.*



TEN MINUTES, TWICE A DAY

Daily & Weekly Care Rhythm

About ten minutes in the morning, ten in the evening, plus a longer task once a week. Small but constant — you do it every day. Pin this by the back door.

THE TEN-MINUTE MORNING

- 1** **Open coop & run**
Count them out — six hens, six birds. A lingerer gets a closer look.
- 2** **Check the waterer**
Refill to the top or replace if fouled. Fresh daily in summer.
- 3** **Check the feeder**
Top off if more than halfway down. ~2 lb a day for six hens.
- 4** **Gather eggs**
Morning and again at the evening check keeps eggs clean.
- 5** **Scan the flock**
~90 seconds: all moving, eating, drinking? Anyone fluffed or off?
- 6** **Scan the perimeter**
30 sec: hardware cloth, apron line, latches — the gap, the loose screw.

THE TEN-MINUTE EVENING

- 1** **Watch them file in**
The last 15 min before sunset they put themselves to bed.
- 2** **Count them in**
Six on the roost. Missing one? Dust-bath corner, then boxes.
- 3** **Close the coop**
The day's most important action — check every latch after sundown.
- 4** **Refill water if needed**
Top off on hot days; warm water on freezing winter nights.
- 5** **Final perimeter scan**
Gate latched, apron intact, no fresh digging at the line.

WEEKLY & MONTHLY

- **Bedding management**
Turn & top deep litter; full deep-clean twice a year, spring & fall.
- **Nesting-box refresh**
Fresh shavings, dished slightly in the center — cleaner eggs all week.
- **Perimeter walk**
Every section of cloth, every fastener, the apron line.
- **Monthly health check**
Handle each hen: vent, feet, mites at the tail base, keel weight.

FEED BY LIFE STAGE

Starter (wk 0–8, 20–22% protein) · **Grower** (wk 8–18, 16–18%) · **Layer** (wk 18 or first egg, 16% protein / ~4% calcium). Offer **oyster shell** and **grit** free-choice in separate dishes — never mixed in the feed. Scratch and treats: no more than 10% of daily intake.

WATER — THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT INPUT

A hen recovers from a day without feed; a day without water in summer risks heat stress. Keep it in shade and refreshed daily in summer; in winter use a heated base or swap unfrozen water two or three times a day.



START HERE

Your First Flock — Six to Start

A mixed flock the book recommends for a first year — variety in the basket, easy to tell apart, a balance of high- and low-production birds. Any six of the ten make a fine first flock. Tick each milestone as it happens.

QTY	BREED	WHAT IT GIVES YOUR BASKET	WHY IT'S BEGINNER-PROOF	TRACK IT		
				chosen	ordered	home
2	Buff Orpington	180–220 brown eggs/yr	The picture of a backyard hen — big, friendly, tolerates handling beautifully.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	Plymouth Rock	200–280 brown eggs/yr	Calm, reliable, integrates with everything. Include one or two just for the reliability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	Australorp	250–300 brown eggs/yr	The production layer — highest steady output with a good temperament; almost never broody.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Easter Egger	200–260 blue–green–pink eggs/yr	The colored eggs alone are why most beginners get one or two. Hardy and friendly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

● *This is one honest mix — swap freely. Any six of the ten breeds make a fine first flock; mixed beats single-breed for a first year because the variety is more fun and you learn what you prefer. No breed is a predator-defense system — that part is the coop, the apron, and the latches.*



Egg & Lay Log

The first egg arrives around weeks 18–22 for the heavy-laying breeds, and almost never looks the way you expect. Watch for the signs, then track what each hen gives you.

1 · REDDENING COMB & WATTLES

The most reliable sign. Pale-pink combs redden and enlarge about two weeks out; bright red with floppy wattles means the first egg is a week to ten days away.

2 · THE SQUAT

Reach toward a near-laying pullet and she drops into a low squat, wings held out. It looks like collapse the first time — it isn't. She's ready to lay. Do not call the vet.

3 · BOX TRAINING

Two weeks out, make the box inviting: two or three fake eggs, a split curtain for dimness, dished bedding. Move any floor egg straight into the box.

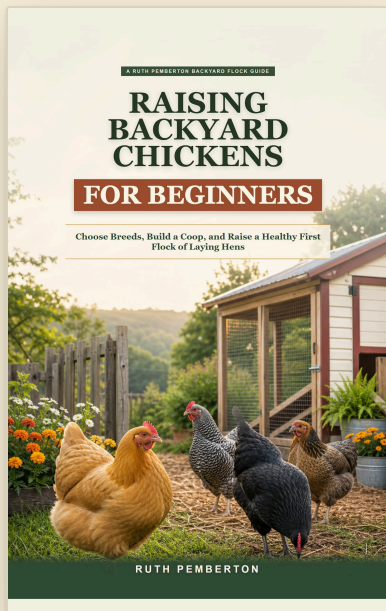
DATE	HEN / BREED	EGGS TODAY	EGG COLOR	NOTES

● *First eggs are usually small, sometimes oddly shaped, and a few are soft-shelled — normal for the first two or three as the system calibrates. A productive hen settles into five to six eggs a week in peak, not seven.*



KEEP GOING

When You're Ready for More



THE FULL BOOK

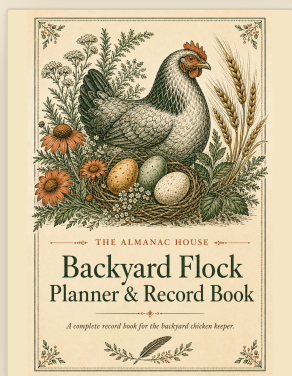
Raising Backyard Chickens for Beginners

Choose breeds, build the coop, raise a healthy first flock

Everything this kit gets you started on, finished — choosing the right breeds, building a safe coop and run, and keeping a healthy flock laying through every season.

GET THE BOOK →

confluencemediagroup.net/almanac-house/authors/ruth-pemberton



KEEP THE RECORDS THAT MATTER

Backyard Flock Planner & Record Book

The complete record book for your flock — a flock register, a monthly egg-production log, a feed and cost tracker, a coop and run reference, a cleaning schedule, a health log, and a seasonal care calendar.

FIND IT ON ETSY →

thealmanachouse.etsy.com

More from Ruth Pemberton — beginner-friendly guides to keeping a backyard flock at confluencemediagroup.net/almanac-house/authors/ruth-pemberton, and her printable planners & record books at thealmanachouse.etsy.com.



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