

Feeding Chickens: The Importance of Age-Appropriate Feed



	0 to 8 Weeks Old	8 to 16 Weeks Old	16+ Weeks Old
Feed by Age	<p>Starter Feed</p> <p>From birth through about eight weeks, chickens rapidly change as they go from chicks to pullets. Your baby chicks need starter feed (pellets or crumbles) to establish and support their bone health and immunity.</p> <p>A healthful starter feed should be filled with complete proteins, amino acids, vitamins, and minerals. Your chicks should eat starter feed for the first eight weeks of their life, until they are introduced to grower feed.</p>	<p>Grower Feed</p> <p>At about eight weeks, chicks are now considered pullets. It's a good idea to transition them to a grower feed focused on healthy development.</p> <p>At this stage, these feeds should have a slightly lower protein content and calcium level (less than 1.25%), but still include omega-3s and other essential nutrients to support digestion and health.</p>	<p>Layer Feed</p> <p>Once your pullets have started laying eggs, it's time to transition these now hens to a higher-calcium and protein-rich layer feed intended to help them lay strong, healthy eggs.</p> <p>All hens lay eggs on their own schedule. Some can lay as early as 16 weeks; some need as long as 32. You can switch to layer feed at 16 weeks, or wait until you find your first egg.</p>

Feed at all Ages	<p>Poultry Scratch & Other Treats: 0 to 16+ Weeks Old</p> <p>Scratch (a blend of grains such as cracked corn, whole wheat, oats, and barley that encourages natural scratching and pecking while aiding in digestion) and similar supplements are designed to aid chicks, pullets, and hens in food digestion. They should be fed like treats and kept to small amounts with the goal of helping your flock engage their natural instincts for scratching and pecking. Treats (including fresh vegetables and fruit and live or dried mealworms or waxworms), are only a small part of a healthy diet. Scratch and other treats should never make up more than 10% of your flocks' diet.</p> <p>Grit: 0 to 16+ Weeks Old</p> <p>Digestible or soluble grit (crushed oyster shell grit) is a calcium supplement that helps promote healthy egg-laying. Chickens of all life stages should have soluble grit in their diet. In addition, once they begin eating foods other than starter feed, chicks also should be offered small amounts of "chick grit," a fine-particle grit to help them break down food and prevent gastrointestinal obstruction.</p> <p>Fresh, Clean Water: 0 to 16+ Weeks Old</p> <p>Water should be changed daily and offered in an automatic watering system or other waterer designed for chickens. During colder months, replace water often or offer it through a heated watering system to prevent freezing.</p>
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