



CHICKENS

MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL



A chicken, *gallus gallus domesticus*, is a domesticated bird raised widely for its meat and eggs. Chickens belong to a group of animals called poultry which include birds raised for meat and eggs. Other poultry animals are turkeys, ducks, and geese.

Chickens are gregarious and live together in flocks. Individual chickens in a flock will dominate others, establishing a “pecking order,” with dominant chickens having priority for food and nesting locations. Removing chickens from a flock causes a temporary disruption until a new pecking order is established.



Fertile chicken eggs hatch at the end of the incubation period, about 21 days. Development of the chick starts only when incubation begins, so all chicks hatch within a day or two of each other, despite perhaps being laid over a period of two weeks or so. Hens do not need a male to produce eggs, only to fertilize them. A flock containing only females will still produce eggs; however, the eggs will all be infertile.

More than 50 billion chickens are reared annually as a source of meat and eggs. In the US alone, more than eight billion chickens are harvested each year for meat, and more than 300 million chickens are reared for egg production. Chickens farmed for meat are called broiler chickens. Chickens farmed primarily for eggs are called layer hens. Some hen breeds can produce over 300 eggs per year.



Because of its relatively low cost, chicken is one of the most consumed meats in the world. Nearly all parts of the bird can be used for food, and the meat can be cooked in many different ways.

Chicken eggs are used in many types of dishes, both sweet and savory. Eggs can be scrambled, fried, hard-boiled, soft-boiled, pickled, and poached. The albumen, or egg white, contains protein but little or no fat, and can be used in cooking separately from the yolk. Ground egg shells are sometimes used as a food additive to deliver calcium.

CHICKEN IDIOMS

Draw lines to match the idiom to the meaning.

**ONE'S
HANDWRITING
IS LIKE CHICKEN
SCRATCH**

A person will eventually reap the consequences of one's actions.

CHICKEN FEED

A person with bad intentions, often trying to take advantage or exploit a situation for his benefit.

**FOX IN THE
HEN HOUSE**

Used to describe someone that is wealthy or prosperous.

**A CHICKEN IN
EVERY POT**

The way people are ranked in relation to each other; hierarchy of a group.

**CHICKENS COME
HOME TO ROOST**

To do something that is nearly impossible or at least very difficult to do.

EAT LIKE A BIRD

A small amount of money.

PECKING ORDER

Used to describe when someone's handwriting is very messy and difficult to read; illegible.

**SCARCER THAN
HEN'S TEETH**

To eat very little.

**TO SNEAK THE
SUNRISE PAST
A ROOSTER**

Giving an opportunity to someone who is only going to take advantage of a situation.

**DON'T LET THE
FOX GUARD THE
HEN HOUSE**

Very scarce, rare or difficult to find.

EGG-CITING FACTS

PROLIFIC EGG LAYERS

Egg-laying by chickens is stimulated by long periods of daylight in warmer months, but they can produce eggs year-round with artificial lighting.

PECKING ORDERS

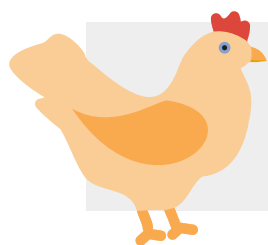
Chickens are animals that adhere to strict social hierarchies called pecking orders. These pecking orders dictate access to food and other resources.

EGGS BEFORE MEAT

Chickens were animals that were primarily used for their eggs; their meat was considered a byproduct. This changed starting around the middle of the 20th century.

FLYING ISN'T THEIR STRONG SUIT

Despite being winged birds, chickens are not known for their flying prowess. They can only "fly" short distances and usually only do so when threatened.



DID YOU KNOW?

In the deep south of the US, chickens are often referred to as yard birds.