

Chicken Life Cycle

Chickens are the most common bird on earth. There are around 175 different varieties and about 60 different breeds of chicken. One popular breed is the Rhode Island Red. Chickens are very social animals and like to live as part of a group. Their groups are called flocks. Each flock has some chicks, hens and a rooster. Chickens have their own language of over 30 chicken sounds. Chickens have full colour vision and have dreams when they sleep, just like us! Chickens eat worms, insects, seeds, grains, fruits, vegetables, and lots more. Chickens don't have teeth; they swallow their food whole into a part of their stomach called the gizzard that has tiny stones in it, which help to grind up their food.



1

What happens during the first stage of the chicken life cycle?

Egg

The hen lays an egg; they can do this without cockerels. The unfertilized eggs are what humans bake cakes and other foods with and eat cooked as boiled, fried, poached or scrambled eggs. Only if the egg is fertilized by a cockerel, can it become a chick. Chickens lay more eggs when it's warmer. Chicken eggs can be brown, white, blue, bluish green and pink. The hen incubates the eggs by sitting on them to keep them warm. The incubation period for a chicken egg is about 21 days. The yellow part inside the egg is the yolk, which gives the chick the food it needs to grow.



2

What happens during the second stage of the chicken life cycle?

Chick

Baby chickens are called chicks. The chick starts its life by hatching from an egg when it is ready. You may see cracks appear on the egg before the chick emerges. This can take a few days. It pecks a hole in the shell with a bump on its beak called an egg tooth. When the chicks first hatch, they are covered with tiny, soft, fluffy feathers called down, but they are wet at first. Down feathers keep them warm.



3

What happens during the third stage of the chicken life cycle?

Hen or Cockerel

The chick grows up and changes over time into a chicken. They grow bigger feathers called contour feathers to keep them warm, and flight feathers on their wings and tail. Female chickens are called hens and male chickens are called cockerels but are also known as roosters. Young hens are called pullets. Chickens can live between 10 and 15 years and are raised for their meat and eggs. Cockerels are bigger and more colourful than the hens. They do a little dance to impress the hens. Cockerels protect the hens and the hens protect their chicks. Cockerels have a comb on their head and two wattles under their neck. Hens are ready to lay their first eggs when they are around 6 months old. When the hen lays and incubates an egg, the chicken life cycle starts all over again! Hens can lay around 300 eggs every year.