

Questions and Answers on Farming

This week we have questions about hens crowing, raising goats, best starter breeds of chickens and keeping the chicken coop clean.

How about if we join the Coffee Break and the Q&A together in one segment! You can grab your favorite beverage, take a short break and read through these questions and my ever so brilliant responses. Feel free to join in the conversation by using the comment section below. Ready? lets get started with this week's

Questions and Answers on Farming.



One of the most frequent questions I get in my email concerns breeds of chickens, like this question from Sue in Maryland.

What Breeds of Chickens Should I Buy?

"I am looking to get some hens next spring. We want them for eggs. What breed did you start with and what breed do you recommend for new chicken owners."

Great question, Sue. We started with two little fluffy chicks that turned out to be white leghorns. They weren't even mine. Two of my employees at the time fell in love with the chicks

at the feed store and I said we would keep the chicks for them. Two chicks quickly became 6 and that quickly became 12 because if we were going to take care of two well we might as well....

Some of my recommendations for chicken breeds to start with are, Rhode Island Reds, Ameraucanas, Silver laced or Gold Laced Wyandottes, Speckled Sussex. These are breeds we have had a lot of success with here at Timber Creek Farm. There are always the ever popular Buff Orpingtons too, a gentle, docile chicken that is favored by people with small children. The production breeds, like the Gold Star, Red and Black Sex links, and Production Reds are great layers, but their laying years are shorter than some of the purebred breeds or heritage breeds.

Smelly Chicken Coop?

From Jillian

I have 11 laying hens, some of which are in molt. I coop them at night and morning and let them out to free range in the afternoon. How often should I clean the coop? Last year I used the deep liter method but now the coop seems to need cleaning every week. I'm using a lot of straw...ideas?

Jillian, I hope that your question has a simple answer. I also use the deep litter method but I find that it is only feasible during the winter. In our area, the weather most of the year is too humid and I find I need to strip out the coop about once every three or four weeks and to re bed the roost areas and nesting areas every week. I would recommend that you start with a bale of dry pine shavings under the straw when getting started with the deep litter coop system. I find that starting with a lot of very dry bedding helps the odor dissipate faster and allows the deep litter method to work. Remember, whenever there is an odor, its because moisture is accumulating somewhere. Check the waterers to make sure nothing is leaking, check for leaks in the roof, and any other potential moisture

accumulating.



How to Get Started with Goats

From Beth, a question on goat care. **I would like more info on goats....best kind to have, tips on taking care of them, milk goats vs goats to have for their hair ie shearing and selling, etc.**

Thanks for asking about the goats Beth. We raise Pygora's. They are a recognized breed developed from careful breeding of pygoras and angoras. They are a medium sized breed about 50 to 80 pounds and raised for the soft fiber fleece they grow. We harvest the fiber twice a year by shearing. Other than that, they are just like other goats. They love grain but shouldn't have too much of it. Goats will eat in a way called foraging. They don't need high quality pasture because they will eat leaves, twigs, brambles, poison ivy and other weeds. One hard

thing about goat keeping can be containing them where you want them to stay. They are good at breaking out of fenced areas, although when ours do escape they usually stay near the barn area. We do not let them free forage when we aren't at the barns, so we also feed low quality weedy hay. If you are more interested in milking goats, the Nubian, Toggenbergs, and Nigerian Dwarf are some good breeds to look into. One special note that is often overlooked concerning the Pygora breed. Goats need copper as an essential mineral in their diets. Copper is toxic to sheep and Pygoras! We raise our Pygoras on the same feed that our sheep get. Just something to be aware of as you research the breeds. Goats are a lot of fun, loving, and adventurous, and a great addition to a homestead or farm. Here are a couple of links to other posts on goat care.

Goat Care and Maintenance

Raising Fiber Animals



Crowing Hens?

Cinda asks: I have a hen that crows every morning like a rooster and this morning she decided to start at 2am she is my only layer right now. I got up one morning and watched her. Is she just confused. I asked my lady at feed store she said she never heard of this before. I have a one of a kind.

While it is strange, Cinda, it can and does happen! This can happen as a dominant hen takes on more and more of the roles that a rooster would be responsible for if you had a rooster. They even start to crow in many instances. This is not the same as a physiological change due to hormone problems or infections. I also found this link to a similar situation. [Crowing Hen.](#)



That wraps up our first edition of Questions and Coffee Break. I will be looking for your next questions to come in. You can always leave them here in the comments area, or post them on our Facebook page or send an email to garmanjanet@gmail.com. So come on, send in those questions! Until next time, don't forget to take a coffee break!

