

Small Flock

Management, Processing, and Marketing



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Overview

- Overview of domestic poultry
- Production Options
- Getting started
- Trouble Shooting
- Processing and Marketing



Terminology

Male

- Cockerel: Male under 1 year of age
- Cock/Rooster: Male over one year of age
- Capon: Neutered male
 - Rome 162 B.C.

Female

- Pullet: Immature female
- Hen: Mature female

General

Chick: Infant

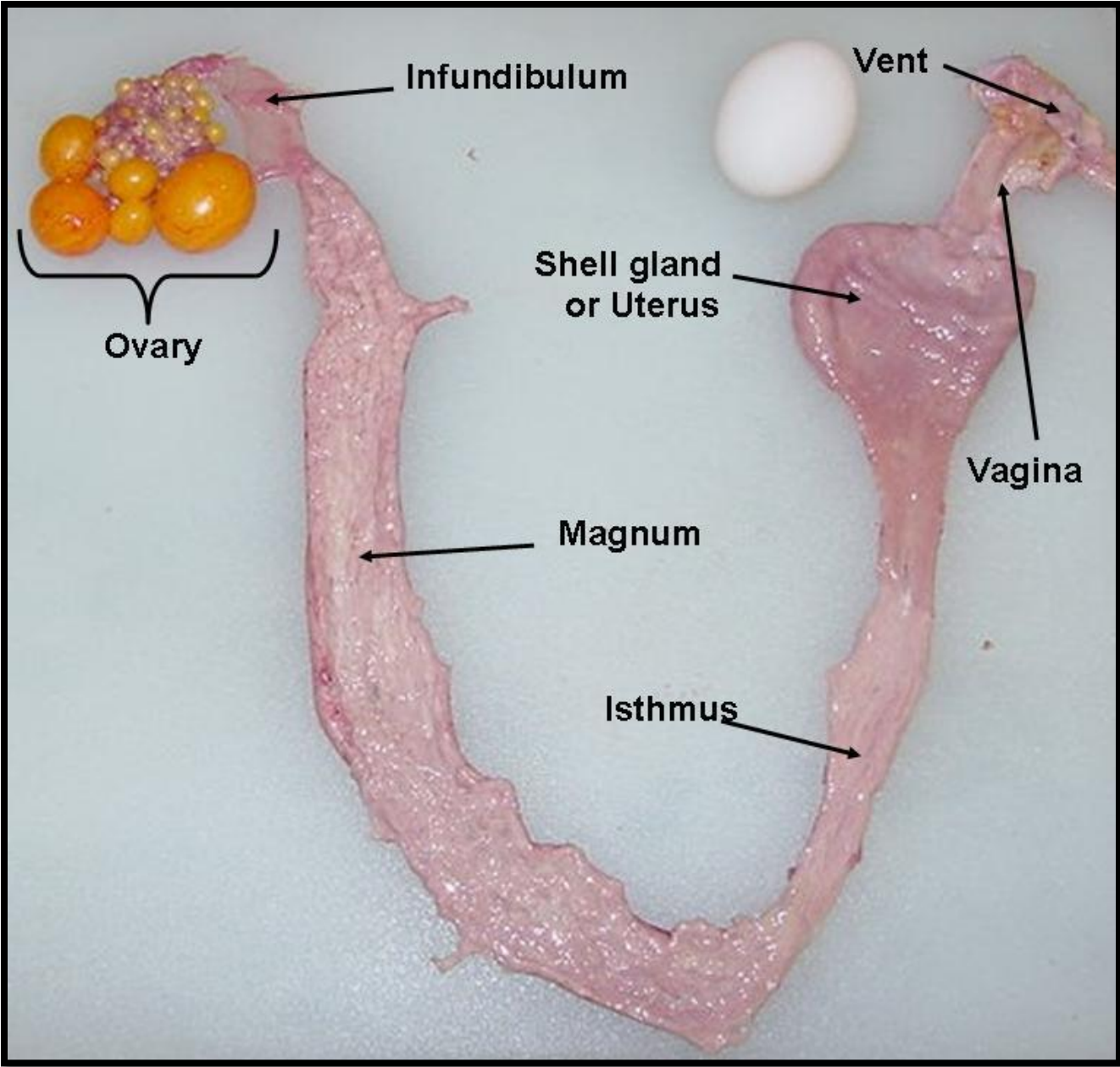
Broiler: Raised for meat

Layer: Raised for eggs

Layers

- Begin laying at 4-5 months/old
 - Produce no more than 1 egg/day
 - Egg color dependent on breed
- Heavy layers can lay up to 300/year
 - Management can increase productivity
 - Production declines in heavy layers after one year
- Can live 5-10 years or more
 - Useful as “soup meat” after productivity





Broilers

- Intensive production
 - Ready at 6 weeks
- Free Range
 - Ready at 14 weeks
- Extremely efficient



A Brief History



- *Gallus domesticus* from *Gallus gallus* (red jungle fowl) approximately 8000 years ago in Asia
- Currently over 50 billion!

Modern Production

- Intensive
 - 74% Meat
 - 68% Eggs
- Pastured
- Backyard/Small Scale



Organic, Natural, Free Range?
Other: Pets, Exhibition

Finding Your Niche

– Goals?

- Meat or eggs or both?
- For family or for resale?
 - Where and to whom will you sell?
 - How large do you want your operation to be
 - » How will you market?
 - » Who are your buyers?



Further Questions to Ask

- Are you allowed to keep poultry where you live?
 - How many? What gender?
- Do you need a rooster?
- How much land do you have?
- What kind of predators might you face?
- What kind of returns do you need to see?
 - How long can you survive without a return?
- How will you handle sick birds?
- How will you dispose of dead birds?

Breeds

- Heavy laying breeds
 - Rhode Island Red, Leghorn
- Meat breeds (crosses)
 - Cornish, Cornish Rock
- Dual Purpose
 - New Hampshire, Plymouth Rock, Wyandotte
- Exhibition
 - Cochin, Polish, Bantams etc.





Layers

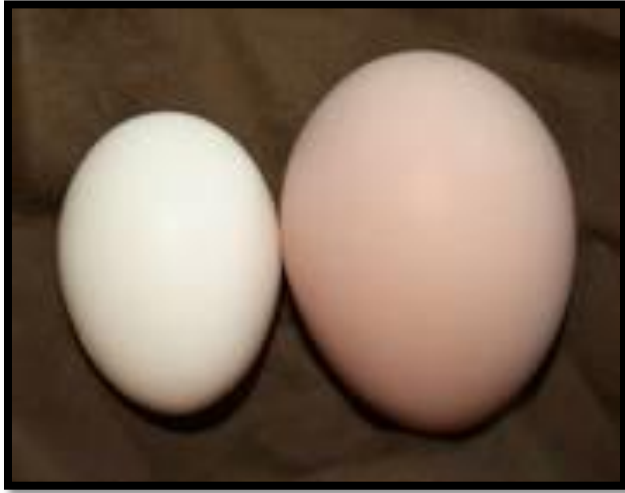


Meat



Dual Purpose



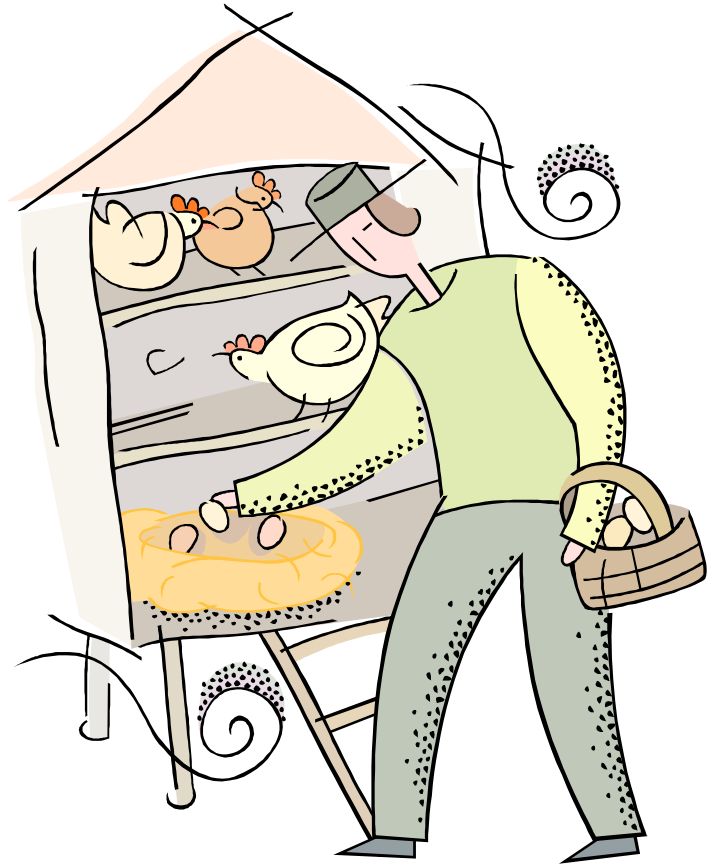


Exhibition



Housing

- Need not be elaborate
- 1.5/8
- Protection from elements
- Protection from predators
- Source of light?
- Well ventilated







Housing

- Perch space of 6-9 inches/bird
- 2-3 Linear inches of food and water
- Nesting boxes (12x12x12)
 - 1 box/5 birds
 - Filled half way with straw
 - Needs to be easily accessible
 - Milk cartons



Getting Started – Fertile Eggs

- Pros:
 - Great science project
- Cons:
 - Infertile or sub-fertile eggs
 - Mixed genders
 - Time



Getting Started - Chicks

- Commercial hatchery by mail
- Local breeder
- Feed store



Getting Started - Chicks

- Pro
 - Can order females only
 - Experience
- Cons
 - Loss
 - Equipment/ housing
 - Time



Getting Started - Pullets

- Local breeder
- Feed store
- Pros
 - Can purchase females only
 - More mature, less time
 - Long productive life
- Cons
 - Initial cost



Getting Started - Hens

- Local breeder/farmer
- Craigslist etc.
- Pros:
 - Ready to go
 - All female
- Cons:
 - Age
 - Disease
 - Productivity
- Always quarantine when growing your flock!



Nutrition

- Commercial feeds are “complete”
 - Supplementation discouraged
- 0-6 weeks
 - Starter
- 6 weeks – slaughter
 - Finisher
- 6 weeks – egg production
 - Developer
- Laying
 - Layer



Health

- Vaccinations
 - Maybe
- Internal parasites
- External Parasites
- Importance of cleanliness



Trouble Shooting: Predators

- Everybody likes chicken!
- Predators come from below and above ground too.
- Keep hens locked up, off the ground if possible, at night.
- Bury fencing or fence underneath coop.
 - 12 inches down, 6 out
- Store feed in airtight containers
 - Bears are drawn to the smell of feed



Trouble Shooting: Laying Problems

- Laying every where:
 - Confine to coop for several days
 - Put golf balls in nest boxes
- Not laying:
 - Aging
 - Bad nutrition
 - Unbalanced
 - Nutrient deficient
 - Inadequate daylight
 - Need 14hrs, can be extended artificially
 - Parasites, diseases
 - Broody
- Odd eggs
 - Poor nutrition
 - Young



Trouble Shooting: Aggression

- Quarantine new birds and introduce at night
- Remove injured birds immediately
- Red light
- More space?
- Cull aggressor?



Getting Your Eggs to Market



Egg Processing and Marketing

- Growing interest in eggs as a protein source
 - Consumers looking for (and may pay a premium for)
 - Fresh
 - Natural
 - Certified Organic
 - Humanely Raised
 - Pastured

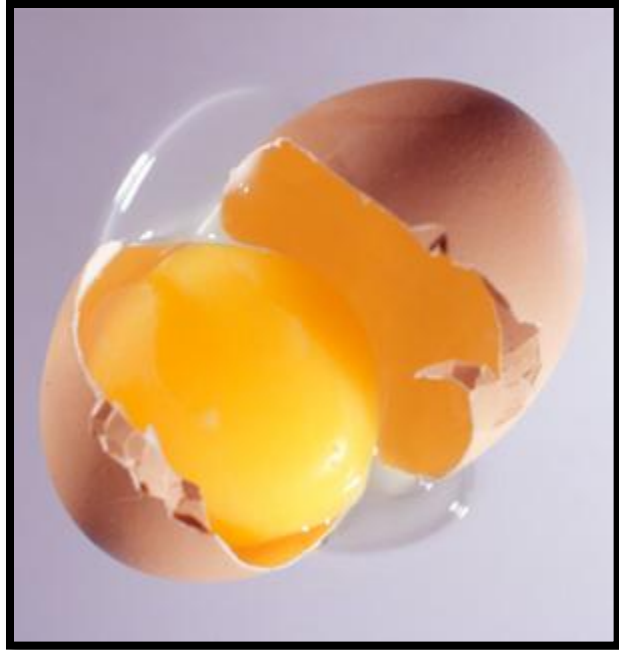


Yard eggs

- Common term for backyard chicken flock eggs
- Many people give away or sell locally
- Cannot sell legally to anyone unless processing in an approved facility, etc.



Processing eggs for direct market



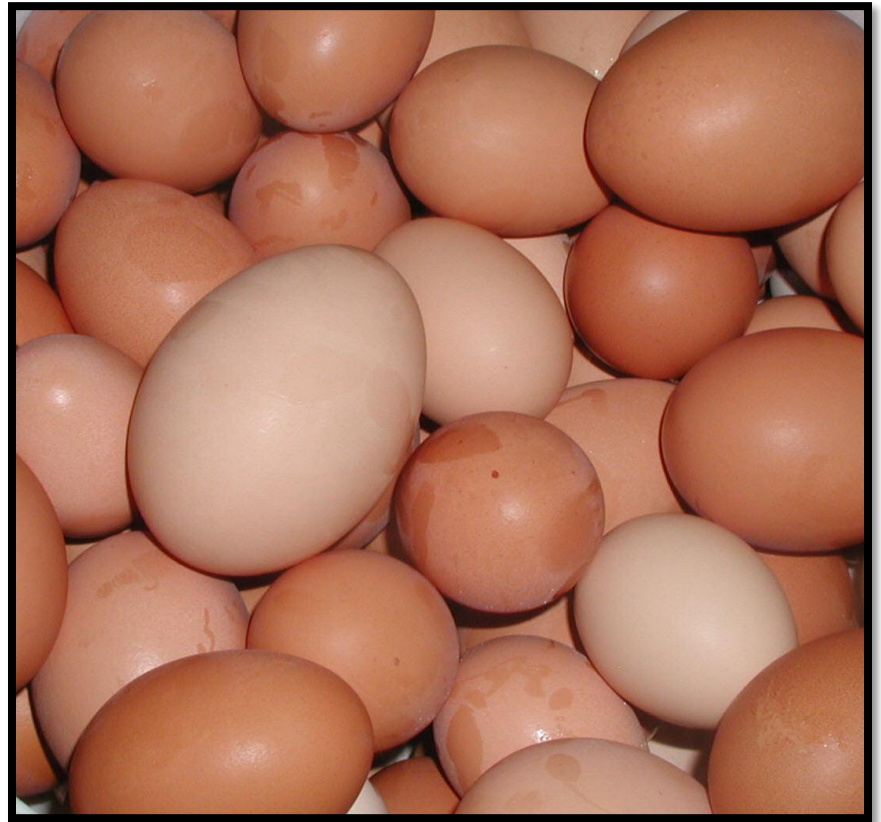
- Less than 3,000 birds
FDACS is the agency of regulation (per the Florida Food Safety Act)
- More than 3,000 birds
USDA is regulator

Facility

- Must have an annual food permit
 - \$490 for >\$15,000 gross sales
 - \$130 for less (limited sales permit)
- Must be separate from living quarters
- Concrete floor and impervious surfaces
- Hot and cold water
- 3 compartment sink, hand sink and mop sink
- Good lighting
- Cooling capability
- Bathrooms
- Wastewater disposal (DOH)
- Get a plan review from FDACS

Additional permits/certifications

- Mobile food permit is needed if selling off site (\$130)
- All food establishments, including mobile carts must have a Certified Food Manager
- UF offers the test with a cost of \$100 - 160



About cleaning eggs

- Keep nesting area clean to reduce dirt and manure on eggs
- Never cool before washing
- Washing is not necessary for home use
- Use easy to clean baskets, flats for collecting
- Wash in water 10° warmer than egg
- Do not let eggs sit in water (porous shell)
- Immediately cool eggs to 45°F and keep them at that temperature
- Under good conditions eggs stay fresh up to 4 weeks

Sanitizing and Grading

- USDA Approved sanitizer and test kit
- Grader/sorter if processing large amounts of graded eggs
- Cooler to maintain 45° temperature until eggs leave processor



Labels and Packaging

- Eggs that are washed, weighed and graded
 - Can be sold in new cartons
 - Use the USDA label guidelines
- Eggs that are washed but not graded
 - Must be sold in bulk or open flats
 - Are considered unclassified eggs
 - Must include a 7 by 7 inch placard at point of sale stating:



These eggs have not been graded as to quality and weight.

Conclusion

- Do a feasibility study first, before investing
- Determine your market before you build
- Get help along the way
 - Extension
 - FDACS plan review



Questions?

