

## **AFFORDABLE CHOOK FEED**

Feeding chickens can be made easier on you and your budget when you soak seeds to double the weight and release many vitamins that keep your poultry happy and healthy. You do not need to leave feed out for them all day! A fully grown laying hen needs only to eat the equivalent of approximately 110 to 130 grams of feed per day, depending on the breed. If you soak the seed mix for 24 hours, it almost doubles in weight, saving you \$ and helping them stay healthy!

A hardy mix of all-important sprouting greens to keep your chooks healthy, includes barrel medic, bok choy, buckwheat, forage chicory, clover, cocks' foot, linseed, lucerne, millet, forage plantain, silverbeet, subclover and sunflower. Other grains to sprout for chooks are: amaranth, corn, chickpea, sorghum, wheat, oats, barley and soybean.

Most have vigorous root systems that will quickly regrow leaves that are cut or eaten. Simply broadcast the seed mix where the chooks will be in a few weeks' time and watch them party when they get there!

Growing your own clucker tucker is a blend of annual and perennial plants, many of which will self-sow. In a forage area, seed can be broadcast; the chooks will need to be kept off the area for the plants to establish. After they have grazed it down, the chooks should be taken off to allow for re-shoot. Where space is limited, grow plants in seedling trays and then place in the chook run once grown. In a pasture, used as an 'herbal ley' it is a healthy addition for all grazing animals. In temperate areas sow March - May or August - October. In subtropical areas sow August - September or May - July. In tropical areas sow April - August. Broadcast seed 2 - 3 g/m<sup>2</sup> in a forage area. In a seedling tray use 1 - 2g per seedling tray.

Growing your own Chook feed?

Bagged feed costs approximately \$35 to \$65+ per chook per year, depending on brand and origin of feed.

Growing their feed will reduce your costs by at least half or more in the long term. With the eventual goal of not having to buy feed again.

They also need to forage for bugs and grubs (protein) this protein they consume will keep the laying season going past the 250 eggs average per year, depending on breed. A simple source of protein is the black soldier fly

larvae (BSF) at approximately 40% pure protein your poultry can thrive during the winter and keep laying eggs. Contact us to learn more about BSF. Another addition to their diet for more eggs during the winter months is calcium, you only need to oven bake the egg shells to dry then blitz in a coffee grinder and add to their feed trough.

Allowing the birds to roam around under trees, in grassy areas and generally where they will find bugs and grubs is good for their diet, it gives them necessary exercise and keeps them healthy for longer.

Chooks also do very well when trained to follow 3 days behind cell grazing cattle. Spreading a little of their feed on the dung patties each day trains them to tear it apart, where they find bugs and fly larvae. This helps break the fly cycle and other parasites that can compromise the cattle's health.

If you feed them kitchen scraps, do not leave what they don't eat in their space. This attracts rodents and disease. Simply rake it up and put it in your compost each afternoon or you can blitz the scraps in a blender and add it to their feed to reduce your feed costs further. It is advisable not to feed them citrus fruits, rhubarb, avocado, chocolate, onion or garlic. Yes, the garlic has some medicinal value to them, however it can change the taste of the eggs! Better off using an apple cider vinegar with garlic ferment in their water!

For more information, contact us any time.

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