

# Chickens as pets

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Keeping **chickens as pets** became increasingly popular in the 2000s.<sup>[1]</sup> among urban and suburban residents.<sup>[2]</sup> Most chickens are kept on farms for the agricultural production of meat and eggs but some chickens are kept as pets,<sup>[3]</sup> along with homegrown eggs and sometimes meat. With the growing interest in all-natural pest control alternatives, people also began to keep chickens<sup>[4]</sup> to rid their property of unwanted insects and larvae.

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Pet chickens frolicking in the wilderness.

## Background

Chickens can be tamed by hand feeding and by being handled. Some people are afraid that roosters will become aggressive, but this problem can easily be avoided if the rooster is handled properly.<sup>[5]</sup> Breeds such as Silkies and many bantams are generally docile, making them ideal pets for owners with small children.<sup>[6]</sup> Some cities in the United States allow chickens as pets but others ban them. Some may only ban roosters due to the crowing.<sup>[7]</sup> City ordinances, zoning regulations or health boards may determine whether chickens may be kept.<sup>[8]</sup> A general requirement is that the birds be confined to the owner's property, not allowed to roam freely. There may be restrictions on the size of the property or how far from human dwellings a coop may be located, etc.<sup>[9]</sup> Hens continue to lay eggs in the absence of a rooster, but like most supermarket eggs, they are unfertilized.<sup>[10]</sup>

The so-called "urban hen movement" harks back to the days when chicken keeping was much more common, and involves the keeping of small groups of hens in areas where they may not be expected, such as closely populated cities and suburban areas. Some people end up keeping urban hens as pets after they reach henopause, or cease laying eggs. In the UK a charity, the British Hen Welfare Trust, rescues commercial hens who would otherwise be sent to slaughter when they become no longer commercially viable. Supporters of the charity adopt the birds as family pets, with the intention of providing them a "retirement". In Asia, chickens with striking plumage have long been kept for

ornamental purposes, including feather-footed varieties such as the Cochin and the Silkie from China, and the extremely long-tailed Phoenix from Japan. Asian ornamental varieties were imported into the United States and Great Britain in the late 1800s. Distinctive American varieties of chickens have been developed from these Asian breeds. Poultry fanciers began keeping these ornamental birds for exhibition, a practice that continues today. Individuals in rural communities commonly keep chickens for both ornamental and practical value. The rarest breed in Britain is the famous Scots Dumpy.

In Hong Kong, keeping chickens and other poultry without a licence has been banned since 2006 because of the threat of avian flu, whether as pets or for consumption. Only licensed farms are legally allowed to keep chickens and other poultry.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Housing

A chicken coop is a housing where chickens are kept. Inside there will often be nest boxes for egg laying along with perches on which the birds can sleep. Backyard coops are small and fenced, often with chicken wire, allowing chickens an area to roam, peck and hunt insects. Chicken tractors are floorless coops which can be dragged about a yard. Some backyard chickens are allowed to free range, and sleep in coops. Urban chicken keeping has led to manufactured chicken coops such as the Eglu, which are designed for tight spaces and have a tidy look. Chicken waterers and feeders are an important part of keeping chickens as pets. There are hanging waterers/feeders, nipple waterers and waterer cups. When creating a home for their flocks, owners should plan on a specific amount of coop space and roosting space, nest boxes, food and water for the number of birds in their flock and also select breeds with an eye towards how many eggs they wish to harvest.

## Show chickens

Chicken shows may be found both at county fairs and sanctioned shows hosted by regional poultry clubs. 4,000 or more birds may be entered in some shows. The Poultry Club of Great Britain sanctions poultry shows in Britain while the American Poultry Association and the American Bantam Association do likewise in America. Such organizations also work with poultry breed clubs of people who have interests in specific breeds of chickens.

## See also

- Chicken as food
- Free-range eggs



Chicks, dyed unnatural colors, sold as pets at a market in Oaxaca, Mexico.



Chicken coop and run.

- List of chicken breeds
- Dust bath
- Pecking order

## References

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## External links

- "More people turn to chickens as pets". *USA Today*. July 20, 2007.

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