

## CHICKEN RUN RESCUE'S HEALTHY DIET FOR CHICKENS

Chicken Run Rescue's mission as it pertains to chicken health and nutrition: we are committed to improving health of chickens by providing the very best foods available for the birds in our care because they deserve it. The objectives of commercial poultry feed is based on what the bird is expected to produce, not the happiness or health of the individual bird.

**Egg laying and health risks to hens:** Egg laying for a hen peaks at 18 months and generally declines with age. Daily egg laying is biologically unnatural and unsustainable. In the wild, chickens lay only one or two clutches a year, in spring and summer, for the purpose of producing offspring—not for someone else's omelet! Hens rarely survive to their 14-year life expectancy because of the compromises made on their bodies. They have been selectively bred for daily egg production, with disastrous impact on their health.

Reproductive cancer and related complications has been the leading cause of premature death in Chicken Run Rescue hens. As of November 2010, we have cared for over 700 chickens and closely monitored their health, diet and preferences. According to our veterinary advisor, a specialist for companion birds and exotics in Minnesota for 38 years, the key ingredients in "layer feed" to stimulate egg laying is high protein and calcium. He has advised us to avoid high protein and calcium "layer" feeds which can stimulate laying in the hens and the wearing out of the reproductive tract.

Since urban chickens have very limited access to nutritious forage, it is important to provide a balanced diet formulated to meet all their nutritional needs. True "free range" means 145.20 sq ft per bird (US Traditional "Stocking Density"). Ground dwelling birds migrate during feeding but return to a preferred roosting spot. If they are confined to one area, they quickly deplete the vegetation and manure concentration promotes diseases. No matter what is planted chickens can get no more than 30% of their nutrition under even the most ideal conditions- 15% of their nutrition from "range" is the most to be expected.

After years of experimenting with other feeds, CRR has switched to feeding Roudybush Maintenance Crumble. This food was developed for companion birds, Adding supplements is not needed and is actually not recommended as over supplementation can be harmful to the bird's health. Best yet- delivered to our door by Fetch Delivers!

<https://www.fetchdelivers.com/php/search.php?kws=roudy&imageField.x=21&imageField.y=3>

According to the manufacturer, it is appropriate for chickens and ducks: "except for sustained egg production in some breeds of chickens or ducks that have been bred for production of large numbers of eggs without a break. For these birds, additional calcium may be needed. Keep in mind that the same principles apply to these birds as apply to

psittacines. Feed maintenance diets to adult birds that are not associated with chicks and that are not laying many eggs (perhaps perhaps a dozen a year). Feed breeder diets to birds that are growing or are laying intermediate numbers of eggs (a clutch to three clutches of eggs a year). Feed breeder diets plus a calcium supplement to birds that are laying a large number of eggs a year." (CRR offers free access to oyster shell since many of our birds came from production breeding strains.)

**Roudybush Maintenance Crumble Ingredients:**

Ground Corn, Ground Wheat, Peanut Meal, Soy Meal, Hydrated Sodium Calcium Aluminosilicate, Yucca Shidigens extract, Salt, Calcium Carbonate, L-Lysine, DL-Methionine, Sodium Selenite (on Calcium Carbonate) Niacin, Alpha Tocopherol Acetate (source of Vit. E), Ascorbic Acid, Biotin, Manganese Sulfate, Calcium Pantothenate, Zinc Oxide, Riboflavin, Pyridoxine Hydrochloride, Vitamin A Acetate, Thiamine, Menadione Sodium Bisulfite Complex (Vit K), Cyanocobalamin (VitB12), Vit D3 Sup., Folic Acid, Ethylenediamine Dihydriodide, Propionic Acid, Ammonium Hydroxide, Acetic Acid, Sorbic Acid, Tartaric Acid, and natural apple flavoring.

**Roudybush Maintenance Guaranteed Analysis:**

Crude Protein 11.0%; Crude Fat 7.0%; Crude Fiber 3.5%; Moisture 12.0%

We are amazed at the improvement in their health, stool, feather condition and activity level. They are still laying (we wish they wouldn't!), but less frequently. The diet supplements nicely what they can't forage for in our backyard setting.

Why do we want fewer eggs?

University of Illinois researchers have been using 2-year-old laying hens (who have ovulated as many times as a woman entering menopause) as a model to study ovarian cancer. "The cause of ovarian cancer remains unknown, but one of the most prevalent theories is the "incessant ovulation hypothesis," that suggests that inflammation associated with continuous ovulation leaves ovarian surface epithelial cells susceptible to malignant transformation. The observation that egg-laying domestic hens frequently develop ovarian cancer supports this hypothesis."\*

Hens are callously discarded and replaced when laying declines. It is not hard for women to empathize with what a toll constant ovulation such as chickens undergo would take on our bodies. All things considered, we would do well to ask the question, "How much is that dozen eggs really costing the birds?"

\*<http://scicasts.com/component/content/article/3133-something-to-cluck-about>

**CRR CHICKEN DIET**

70 % BALANCED PELLET OR CRUMBLE

10% SCRATCH

20% FRESH

BALANCED PELLET OR CRUMBLE.

**CRR's First Choice**

Roudybush Maintenance Crumble (available through Fetch Delivers)

Probios\* sprinkled on food or mixed in water (3 tbs. per gallon) fresh daily

\*Probios® Soluble Inoculant for Poultry is used for poultry as a stabilized water soluble direct fed microbial source to help maintain normal appetite, maintain proper gut flora, maintain normal gut digestion during times of stress and improve feed conversion for increased growth. It can be used at ration changes, weather changes or following antibiotic therapy or other forms of stress.

### **Benefits**

Probios® Soluble Inoculant for Poultry contains a source of live (viable) direct fed microbials. Since one direct fed microbial alone cannot provide all the required health benefits, it contains 3 species of the unique PS strains for live naturally occurring lactic acid bacteria including two species of Lactobacillus (plantarum, casei) along with Enterococcus faecium. It has an elevated level of these direct fed microbials. It helps support proper digestion and bowel health in all classes of poultry in a convenient water soluble powder format. The water soluble powder maybe dissolved in watering systems for mass administration to flocks of poultry.

### **CRR's Second Choice**

Purina Sunfresh Recipe line provides balanced nutrition made from all vegetable protein, free of hormones or medication. However, it is much higher in protein (20%) and our birds don't like it very much. That line includes these products:

Flockraiser (pellets or crumble)

Start & Grow (pellets or crumble)

*For sick birds:* Roudybush Maintenance Crumbles or Harrison's High Protein (complete nutrition pellets) or Nupreen Hand Feeding Formula

CRR birds don't care for expensive organic feeds. Those foods are designed for the people who consume chickens and eggs who want to avoid hormones, medications, and genetically engineered ingredients. Our birds wind up wasting it looking for the "good stuff".

Also avoid feeds containing "meat byproducts" which is slaughterhouse refuse deemed unfit for human consumption. It can include chicken and other livestock manure, litter, diseased body parts and feathers, beaks, feet, hooves, hair, etc.

### **SCRATCH**

Includes cracked corn, oats, black oil sunflower seeds. Should be fed sparingly as dessert or treat, not an entire diet.

## FRESH

Nutritious foods and table scraps- experiment! (Caution- onion, avocados and chocolate are toxic to birds. When in doubt research lists of foods toxic/safe for chickens)

greens (not iceberg- no nutrition)

fruits (melon- esp. watermelon), grapes, raisins, tomatoes, bananas, etc.)

vegetables (cucumbers, cooked corn on the cob, etc.)

cooked egg- the absolute favorite (hardboiled and mashed- shell and all). We cook their own eggs and serve back. Ours will not touch store bought eggs- even "organic", "free range" or "cage free" (misnomers!).

pasta, rice, whole wheat bread

Plant forage for chickens, the best are probably regular grasses such as:

timothy

oat

rye

bluegrass

fescue

alfalfa

red clover

We have planted our garden with sod (re-sodded twice a season), berry bushes, kale, tomato, cucumber, mint, grape, along with non-toxic plants for shade and cover.

Good resource for toxic plant: <http://www.ahdf.org/Toxic.htm>

NOTE- many lists disagree- all things in moderation is a safe approach.

## **Grit/minerals/supplements**

egg shells (calcium supplement)

oyster shells or calcium block grated

small granite grit

flax seed oil or ground seed