

Most breeds of poultry have either been bred to lay an incredible number of eggs, or grow exceptionally fast (for meat).

As such, our backyard chooks are no longer their hardy wild counterparts, and it is crucial that you feed the right diet to the correct life stage to make sure protein and calcium levels are correct, as well as balanced nutrients.



### When to feed

Your standard diet (as below) should be on offer at all times ('ad-lib') as chooks should stop eating once they've met their requirements (with the exception of some meat breeds). Feed only this diet first thing in the morning, so they fill up on the well balanced ration, before letting them out to free range.

Kitchen scraps should be fed later in the day once they've had breakfast. "Scratch" grains (treat grains like corn and wheat) should only be used as a treat or to get them into the coop at night. Fresh, clean water must be available at all times.

### Chicks <6 weeks old

Feed a chick-starter crumble. This also contains a coccidiostat to protect against a nasty bug in the dirt called coccidia, while the chick builds immunity against it.



### Growing chicks (Pullets) 6-20 weeks old

Move your chicks onto a grower pellet, which has higher protein levels appropriate for fast growing bodies.



### Laying hens 18-22 weeks old

As soon as your girls start laying they must go on to a "layer" formula so they receive adequate levels of calcium. Pellets are preferable to mixes, as they are ensured a

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perfectly balanced diet in every mouthful. With mixes, they will pick and choose. DO NOT feed a layer pellet any younger than 16 weeks at an absolute minimum. Ideally, simply wait for them to start laying, which is usually between 18-22 weeks old.



### Roosters

Roosters do well with additional protein. They usually do fine eating a layer diet alongside your hens, and this is what most people do, however the excessive calcium can on rare occasion affect their joints. You can find rooster-specific diets.

### Hen with young chicks

You will want to separate a hen with her chicks to protect them. It's okay to feed the hen chick starter temporarily until the hen chicks are old enough to leave her. The higher protein will do well as she will have lost weight sitting on the eggs. The coccidiostat means you cannot eat her eggs while she's on the food, but she will likely take a while to start laying again anyway.

### Mixed flock including roosters, layers and non-layers

There is no perfect diet for everyone, and efforts should be made to separate life

stages and feed according. If you must feed together, you may feed a "grower pellet" and make sure you have bowls of additional soluble grit for the layers to be able to supplement themselves (see below).

### Soluble grit vs insoluble grit

Insoluble grit sits in the gizzard (a stomach chamber) and helps to grind up food that moves through. Free ranging hens will pick this up naturally. For example small stones. It is not digested as a food source.

Soluble grit is a source of calcium, such as crushed oyster shell or limestone. This should always be on offer for laying hens in a separate feed dish, who will supplement themselves as needed.

**SOLUBLE GRIT SHOULD NEVER BE ADDED TO THE MAIN DIET. NEVER USE DOLOMITE LIMESTONE.**

*\*Updated Aug 25*