

## What do chickens eat and drink?

As with any living creature, a varied diet and good nutrition is important. Well-fed chickens are able to provide healthier eggs and survive harsher conditions. Ensure there's a constant supply of fresh food—chickens are designed to eat all day.

**Water:** Since an egg is made up of 70-75% water, laying hens need a constant supply of fresh, clean water. Water troughs must be kept clean and shaded from the sun. A minimum drinking space of 100 mm is recommended for each hen, with sufficient space for all birds to drink at the same time (essential during hot weather). Three laying hens need approximately a litre of water per day.

Feed a combination of commercial poultry food supplemented with kitchen scraps. Scraps alone are not sufficient nutrition and should not be high in salt or fat.

**Layers mash or pellets** will include all the essential nutrients, whether you buy mash or pellets is entirely up to you. It's all the same just different format. We would suggest an organic based pellets. We highly recommend that you read the ingredients list before making your selection.

**Shell Grit** : usually oyster shell is another key requirement, because chickens don't have teeth, they are unable to chew their food. Instead they will eat some grit as and when they need it and store it in their gizzards. This will the grind their food. Shell grit contains calcium which is great for bone & egg development.

**Scratch** : Many people also purchase "scratch" for their birds. If you want to see a chicken go bonkers, give it some scratch! It's a mix of grains including corn, wheat, oats and rye, among others. Unlike your complete feed which should be kept in a feeder for around the clock access, scratch is usually thrown on the ground for the chickens to peck at. It should be a special treat - not a staple of their diet - because it doesn't include all the nutrients they need. Your girls will let you know if you're giving them too much. Their eggshells will become weak and susceptible to breakage. They will also become overweight. As a guide, feed small amounts that the flock will eat in five to 10 minutes.

**Greens** are an important part of chickens diet, suitable matter includes, cabbage, spinach, chard, chickweed, dandelion, apples, pear, silver beet, cabbage or cauliflower leaves can be given to hens

**Treats** – extra protein can be gained by eating insects. If you really want to spoil your chickens, buy them a pot of meal worms, trust us, you will have friends for life.

Store feed in vermin-proof containers

### Is there any Foods Chickens Shouldn't Eat?

One of the great benefits of having chickens are they take care of your unwanted leftovers! But there are a few foods they shouldn't eat, though

- Citrus fruits and peels (they can cause a drop in egg production)
- Bones
- Any large serving of meat, or meat that has gone bad
- Garlic and onion (unless you want your eggs tasting like them)
- Avocado skins and pits
- Raw potato skins
- Long cut grass - Grass that is very long can sometimes cause a digestive problems
- Coffee
- Rhubarb,
- Fresh lawn clippings are excellent but large amounts are not recommended as they tend to go mouldy before being eaten.
- Chocolate (as if you'd give that up!)
- Don't feed anything that's rancid (unpleasant, stale smell) or spoiled.
- Be aware that snail bait and pesticides are harmful to chickens.

**Table scraps** should not make more than 20% of the weekly rations.

