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CHICKEN PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Chicken Project Management Plan

June 2016

There are a number of reasons why our group would like to have chickens. These include the obvious benefit of having chicken manure available on site to be used as a supplement to our compost on all garden plots. Chickens are entertaining, great pets and are useful as they provide both manure and eggs. We envisage greater community interest and involvement in the garden precinct with the inclusion of chickens, which would then have the added bonus of building greater community relationships & increasing garden membership.

We have proposed an area in our garden design layout that would be suitable for a chook house/yard as is situated on the northern side of the park this site is a considerable distance from residential properties and is in an open area making it visible for passive surveillance. The area will provide shade on hot days and necessary sunlight in the mornings.

Chicken Coop

The Chicken coop will be kept in a clean, safe and healthy condition and offensive odours, waste and vermin will be kept under control. It will be weather proof and have mesh dug into the soil to prevent rats and foxes gaining access to the chickens or eggs. The coop will have a locked gate with a combination lock to reduce vandalism and theft.

Chicken Requirements

Chooks have modest requirements, the basic points are:

- chooks need to be contained & protected from predators
- they need room to move about
- they need shelter from the weather
- the pen should be in a convenient spot so egg collecting is easy

Room – more floor space is essential with full time containment, however, even if housing is only used at night, it makes sense to set up so you can keep hens locked up in comfort when away for long weekends or during cold wet weather. Allow 1m sq of floor space per bird and add a little more in case of future increased flock numbers.

We will provide the following recommendations at this location.

Source : http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_reg/lgr2005328/sch2.ht

- store bulk food in weather proof storage in pest-proof containers
- consider using lime to combat odour problems and reduce the soil pH
- gather up all manure and place it in weather-proof and fly-proof containers at least once every seven days
- The floors of poultry houses must be paved with concrete, mineral asphalt or situated on clean sand underneath the roosts or perches.
- Be enclosed to prevent poultry from escaping
- At all times be kept clean and free from offensive odours and vermin
- Consideration should be given to the impact on adjoining properties
- Council does not permit the keeping of roosters in residential areas.
- Poultry must not be kept under such conditions as to create a nuisance or to be dangerous or injurious to health.

Chicken coop will be a prefabricated

The 'Chicken Palace' is the most recent addition to the Royal Rooster range of chicken coops.

The Chicken Palace is not a mobile coop but is rather a 'Chicken House' designed to stay in a fixed position in a yard - for 4 chickens in a permanent enclosure.

Great for children to go inside and spend time with the chickens. Also ideal for the elderly who may have problems moving a mobile coop.

- Suits up to 4 chickens in permanent enclosure or up to 10 chickens to be free ranging during the daytime and supervised. Chicken will have to be in permanent enclosure at all times.
- Measures 2.3m long, 1.6m wide and 2.2m high (1.66m door height)
- Made from strong, yet light-weight, aluminum frame
- Strong 2.5mm thick galvanised mesh with 25mm squares
- Galvanised mini corrugated iron
- 2 wooden laying boxes, and 2 wooden perches provided
- Takes between 2-3 hours to assemble, with detailed illustrated instructions provided
- The Chicken coupe must be enclosed to prevent the escape of poultry
- Wire will be installed around the base of the surrounding coupe to prevent access from foxes or rats.
- The Chicken Palaces is made with small sized steel mesh, 2.5mm gauge with 25mm squares. This strong mesh is difficult to accidentally damage and is impossible for foxes to chew through the mesh. The walls, back wall and entire roof of the Chicken Palace are made using very stylish zinalume mini corrugated iron.

<http://www.royalrooster.com.au/>

Step-by-step

1. Put down a 300mm layer of litter for birds to scratch about in & soak up droppings
2. Install a wheelbarrow ramp at the gate to clear out litter. Throw spent material on compost.
3. Build an eave about 1m wide to shelter birds
4. Hang a hinged gate to secure the enclosure. Install a self-closing spring & latch and a padlock.
5. Set up a perch under cover, 200mm of space per bird, 50mm wide and about 500mm off the ground
6. Mount the nest boxes on the pens cool side
7. Chook Litter – leaves, straw, shredded paper

Chooks start to lay at about 18 – 22 weeks & continue to do so for a couple of years. In her first year a hen will lay up to 5 eggs a week, but production declines with age. Six birds should supply about 24 eggs a week.

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Since an egg is made up of more than 70 -75% water, laying hens need a constant supply of clean water.

Recycle all weeds by tossing into chook shed. Not only does this ensure regular feeds of greens, that are so important in their diet, but it also means the weeds are transformed into compost which is ideal for garden mulch. When the coop is cleaned out add the litter to the compost so it can compost a little longer before using it as mulch on vegetable plots or digging it into the soil.

Chicken Calendar

Daily – scrub water containers & refill to prevent algae & contaminants from building up. (In winter every 3rd day may suffice). Check & refill feeders as needed

Weekly – check nest litter & replace if soiled

Monthly – crushed garlic (one clove per 2 to 3 hens) added to drinking water once monthly for 3 days helps reduce internal parasites & keeps birds healthy. Remove nest litter, brush out (wash if necessary) and replace with fresh litter.

Note: current advice is not to worm birds unless you need to. This can be ascertained by collecting faeces & having them analysed by a diagnostic service. Pale thin birds &/or foamy diarrhea may indicate worms.

Seasonal maintenance

Summer

- Don't remove litter from hen house – hens will scratch deep into it on hot days to cool down.
- Ensure shell grit kept topped up – egg shells become thinner in hot weather
- Reduce treats – fat hens can succumb to heat stress
- Provide an additional water container
- Freeze water in a plastic bottle & use in drinker on hot days – hens dislike warm water

Autumn

- External parasites may have built up, so check birds for lice & their house for the presence of red mite.
- Treat hen house with food grade diatomaceous earth (DE) & add to the flocks dust bath.
- Contact the City of Sydney to install a rat station to reduce rats and mice and clean away potential hiding spots e.g. grass and timber in the area.
- Hens molt in autumn so wait until they have all molted, then thoroughly clean out the hen house.

Winter

- Add extra floor litter to keep the hen house warm.
- Check again to ensure no external parasites remain after autumn treatment
- Add some chopped onion tops to boost the immune system

Spring

- Egg lay is at its peak now, so top up nest litter weekly & remove any sticky mess from broken eggs.
- Hens need lots of greens to keep egg yolk a rich yellow
- It is important to keep up shell grit so eggshells remain strong
- Be vigilant about collecting eggs: if left in nest overnight their presence encourages hens to go broody & sit on them.

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- Don't want broody hens? Remove from nest & isolate with feed & water for 5 to 10 days in a pen

Food

- Poultry need similar food requirements to humans – grains, proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals and trace elements. Many grains contain protein, such as wheat (16% protein). Chooks need 1/5 of their food as protein.
- **Do not feed eggshells.**
- Feed fresh green weeds, preferably with soil attached as it will be rich in micro-organisms. Chooks foraging on greens will produce beautiful deep-coloured yolks. Growing herbs outside the chook yard, right on the fence line, allows chooks to peck selectively at what grows through, as plants would never survive inside. Beneficial herbs are tansy, sage, bay and rosemary which are all insecticidal herbs. Comfrey is a nutritional herb high in protein. Grains should be supplemented by grass and insects. Chopped garlic can be put in water occasionally & is a good insect infestation preventative.
- Most kitchen scraps
- Fresh drinking water daily
- Generally chooks will eat up to 1kg of food per week. Comfrey is a nutritious herb and high in protein.

Food storage

- Greens need to be given fresh to poultry & should not be left on the ground to rot. The same can be said for kitchen scraps. Give them early in the day.
- Grains must be stored securely in a bin with a lid to reduce vermin & kept in a dry & cool place.

Chicken illness and disease prevention

Healthy chooks need good shelter & enough outdoor space (1 ½ square metres per chook) plus nutritious food & clean water.

Worms and internal parasites. A small piece of copper pipe or penny in their drinking water will stave off worms & internal parasites. Nettles are a preventative for worms as is grated carrots and chopped garlic.

Lice if birds succumb to lice – dust with yellow dusting sulphur. A pinch of Dolomite can be put in their mash as a preventative. Lice can occur in old wood which is touching another piece of wood, such as in roosting perches. To guard against this, suspend the horizontal perch on a thin but strong rope from the roof.

Scaly legs sometimes chooks develop scaly legs. Paint following on their legs (it can also be used to paint perches for lice) : Heat warm organic olive oil & a little beeswax together with lots of chopped insecticidal herbs such as rosemary, sage, tansy & bay leaves. When cool pour into a jar & keep the brush in it to use when necessary.

Worms nettles are a preventative for worms as is grated carrot & chopped garlic.

Dustbathes are used by chooks to rid themselves & each other in keeping down any pests. "Nests", made for dustbathes, are also used for sunbathing & are necessary in providing warmth & security for the chooks. Make the most of this instinctive activity by adding either Sulphur powder or DE to the dry soil. Both will help eliminate external parasites that live on birds including lice and

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northern mite; however Sulphur will need renewing if the site gets wet, whereas DE dries out and will desiccate any parasites it comes into contact with.

Note: (DE = Diatomaceous earth. A naturally occurring, soft sedimentary rock that crumbles into a fine white powder, which can dehydrate insects.)

Manures and compost

Fresh chicken manure (or any animal manure) should never be added directly to a garden or veggie patch but it can be safely added to a compost heap. Chicken manure has one of the highest fertilizer values of all animal manures, with nitrogen content far higher than even cow manure.

Problems

- if birds eating chook food - try overhead netting or shade cloth.
- Non-laying Hens – during unexpected cold or wet period, or if they are sick, or seasonally in winter & sometimes in a hot summer. If hen stays on nest for over long periods it may be “broody” – its comb would be pale red & its demeanor somewhat inward or melancholic.
- Solution: isolate Broody hen for 4 days on a bare floor with only water to drink.
- Old hens not producing eggs are still worthwhile in the group in a “mothering” role
- Pecking Order: newcomer = bottom rank. Group may peck, ram and or prevent access to food.

Solutions

- fence off a small section and isolate until all settle.
- introduce newcomer at night when others sleeping
- lock them in together and let them sort it out while ensuring food access and no injuries
- Safe Environment for the chickens
- shed should be light, airy and strong in case of winds and with a leak proof roof. Doorway should face east and not north (too hot in summer). Ideally the floor should be wooden and raised from the ground with a gentle sloping ramp from door to chook run.
- Roosts for them at night – best hung from roof to avoid wooden ends contacting the walls thus preventing lice and other infestations.
- Floor – cover with loose straw which will catch chook droppings. Sweep out and air regularly
- Laying boxes – wooden are ideal – protected, safe and peaceful space to lay. Can be lined with straw.
- Water – needs to be available day and night (do not leave food out at night as it encourages vermin infestation and goes off).

Eggs and Eggshells:

Soft egg shells are a sign that the hen may be old or lacks calcium. Composted soil and good diet should remedy that

Hens are excitable and nervous of cats, dogs and any unwanted intrusion into their territory. They can also peck any intruder and draw blood, either from another hen or a human.

Conflict with residents and vandalism

- no rooster – no noise
- invite the local residents in to meet the chook family
- maintain the chooks and area in a clean, tidy and orderly manner
- if problems be open to discussion, offer eggs and educate re the benefits of having chooks
- if coop does get smelly eg the smell of manure after a couple of days of rain – clean up the area promptly and put litter and manure in the onsite compost bins.

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Gardener Safety

- Wear personal protective clothing e.g. heavy gloves
- Handle chickens with care, particularly when picking up, to avoid being pecked or clawed. Hold wings firmly but not tightly and do not drop.

Starter Flock

Birds are usually vaccinated and treated for parasites by the producer (but check this when buying).

Point of Lay (18 to 22 weeks old) : Hy-Line or ISA Brown layer cost approximately \$25 each.

Feed and Litter

- High-protein layer pellets cost approx \$15 to \$22 per 20kg bag (allow about 130g per bird per day)
- Shell grit : about \$23 per 30kg bag
- chicken pickings' (corn mix): about \$25 per 30kg bag
- bale of straw: from \$7 . Shredded paper can be a cheaper alternative.
- Bale of wood shavings: from \$15

Parasite control:

- diatomaceous earth (DE): about \$29 per 5kg bag.
- A Material Safety Sheet for DE will be required by Gardeners to read and sign acknowledging risks and adhering to personal protective - wearing of dust mask and plastic gloves when using DE.

Approvals

There are no requirements under the develop control plans or the local development control plan for a chicken coupe or chickens on Council land.

The garden group will comply with the local government regulation schedule 2 part 5 division 20, by;

- Chickens must not be kept under such conditions as to create a nuisance or to be dangerous or injurious to health.
- Chicken coupe must at all times be kept clean and free from offensive odours.
- Chickens must not be kept within 4.5 metres (or such greater distance as the Council may determine in a particular case) of a dwelling, public hall, school or premises used for the manufacture, preparation, sale or storage of food.
- The floors of chicken coup must be concreted underneath the roosts or perches. However, this sub-clause does not apply to chicken coupe :(a) that are not within 15.2 meters of a dwelling, public hall or school, or (b) that are situated on clean sand.
- Chicken coupe must be so enclosed as to prevent the escape of poultry.

References:

- The Contented Chook, ABC Books
- Caring for Chooks Biodynamically, Diane Watkin
- Organic Gardener, essential guide. ABC

Contacts:

Bourke st Community Garden

Georgina Bathurst 0414 414 085
John Penny 0404 163 007

RSPCA (02) 9770 7555

Darlinghurst Vet Clinic (02) 9380 2300
234B Crown St, Darlinghurst 2010.

In the case of injured or dead birds

Notify local vet and RSPCA immediately. RSPCA (02) 9770 7555

Darlinghurst Vet Clinic (02) 9380 2300
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As the chicken coop will be lockable theft should not occur, however if there is a theft the police will be notified.



Photo: Showing Chicken palace