STARTER GUIDE AND CHECKLISTS

Backyard Poultry Starter Guide

Choosing birds, housing, brooding, feeding, disease prevention and simple records for a small desi or improved-breed flock.

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Good breeds for backyard farming in India

Breed	Type	Notes
Vanaraja	Dual purpose	Colourful, hardy, good for free range; developed by ICAR
Gramapriya	Egg type	Lays more eggs than desi birds; brown eggs
Kuroiler	Dual purpose	Fast growing, survives on kitchen waste and forage
Kadaknath	Meat (premium)	Black meat with high market price; slower growth
Aseel	Meat, game	Strong, hardy desi breed; few eggs
Giriraja	Dual purpose	Heavy bird developed in Karnataka; good brown eggs

Housing basics

- Night shelter that is dry, airy and safe from dogs, cats, snakes, mongoose and rats.
- Give about 2 to 3 sq ft per adult bird inside, more if birds stay in all day.
- Raise the floor or use 2 to 3 inches of dry litter (rice husk or sawdust); keep it dry.
- Run east to west to reduce afternoon sun; use wire mesh on the sides.
- One nest box for every 4 to 5 laying hens, in a dark corner.

Brooding chicks

Chick age	Temperature under brooder	What to watch
Week 1	About 33 to 35 °C	Chicks spread evenly = right; huddled under lamp = cold; panting at edges = too hot
Week 2	About 30 to 32 °C	Raise the bulb a little each week
Week 3	About 27 to 29 °C	Give more floor space as chicks grow
Week 4 onward	Room temperature (21 to 27 °C)	Remove heat in summer; keep it longer in winter

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Feeding

Stage	What to feed
0 to 8 weeks	Chick starter feed; clean water always
8 to 18 weeks	Grower feed plus green fodder and forage
Laying hens	Layer feed or balanced home mix with shell grit or limestone for strong eggshells
Free-range birds	Kitchen waste, broken grains and forage, plus a little supplementary feed every evening

Common diseases: warning signs

Disease	Signs	Prevention
Ranikhet (Newcastle)	Gasping, twisted neck, green watery droppings, sudden deaths	Vaccination on schedule
Gumboro (IBD)	Young birds dull, ruffled, whitish watery droppings	Vaccination; clean brooding
Fowl pox	Scabs on comb, wattles and face	Vaccination; mosquito control
Coccidiosis	Bloody droppings, drooping, poor growth	Dry litter; clean waterers
Respiratory disease (CRD)	Sneezing, nasal discharge, swollen face	Ventilation; no overcrowding
Bird flu	Many sudden deaths, swollen blue comb	Report sudden mass deaths to the veterinary department immediately

Biosecurity checklist

- ☐ Buy chicks from a known hatchery; keep new birds apart for 2 weeks
- ☐ Keep a foot dip or separate shoes for the shed
- ☐ Do not let visitors or traders into the shed
- ☐ Keep wild birds and rodents out of feed
- ☐ Remove dead birds at once and bury or burn them
- ☐ Clean and disinfect the shed before every new batch

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Daily checklist

- [ ] Fresh clean water morning and evening
- [ ] Feed given and leftovers checked
- [ ] Count birds; look for sick or dull birds
- [ ] Collect eggs 2 to 3 times
- [ ] Check litter is dry
- [ ] Close the shelter safely at night
- [ ] Write eggs, feed and deaths in your record

Weekly checklist

- [ ] Wash and disinfect waterers and feeders
- [ ] Turn or replace wet litter
- [ ] Check for lice and mites under wings
- [ ] Check vaccination due dates
- [ ] Repair fences and mesh
- [ ] Weigh a few birds to check growth
- [ ] Check feed stock and expiry

Weekly flock record

Week / date	Birds at start	Deaths	Sold / eaten	Eggs collected	Feed used (kg)	Money spent (Rs)	Money earned (Rs)

Track eggs, feed, costs and profit with our free Layer and Broiler Excel trackers at vetvaishnavi.com/downloads.

This guide is general information for animal owners and farmers and does not replace an examination by a veterinarian. Vaccine schedules and scheme rules can differ by region and change over time; confirm with your vet, local veterinary hospital or official sources. Questions? Visit

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