

## **A. General Information**

1). What is the cause of crooked toes in chickens?

Most crooked toe conditions are either management or nutrition related. A lack of the vitamin riboflavin results in an inward curling of the toes and is called curled toe paralysis. Improper incubation temperatures will increase the incidence of crooked toes as will inbreeding. A few chickens with crooked toes (3-5 per 100) are not unusual. High yield meat-type birds will have more of a problem with crooked toes but this generally does not hurt the birds.

2. How many hens are needed to supply eggs for the average family?

Four to five hens will supply 2-4 eggs per day.

3. Why do chickens have different skin colors?

Skin color is a genetic trait. The breeds of chickens developed in this country, such as the New Hampshire, Plymouth Rock and Rhode Island Red, have yellow skin. Some of the English breeds, such as the Orpington and Sussex, have white skin.

The degree of yellow color in a yellow-skinned breed depends on the amount of yellow pigment in the feed, whether the bird is laying or not (egg production over time causes the pigment to disappear), and the health of the bird. Yellow corn, green grass and alfalfa meal is good sources of yellow pigment. Some diseases, such as coccidiosis, or mal absorption syndrome interfere with the normal deposition of yellow pigment in the bird's skin.

4. What are the correct common names for immature and mature poultry?

	<u>Immature</u>	<u>Mature</u>	
		<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Chicken	Chick	Cock <sup>1</sup>	Hen <sup>1</sup>
Turkey	Poult	Tom	Hen
Duck	Duckling	Drake	Duck
Goose	Gosling	Gander	Goose
Guinea	Keet	Cock	Hen
Pheasant	Chick	Cock	Hen
Swan	Cygnets	Cob	Hen
Peafowl	Peachick	Peacock	Peahen

<sup>1</sup>Cockerel is term for young mature male; pullet for young female.

5. What are some common causes of abnormal feathering?

The most common cause is a deficiency of one of the following nutrients:

<u>Nutrient</u>	<u>Deficiency Symptom</u>
Amino Acids	slow feather growth, abnormally long primary feathers
Iron	complete depigmentation in red-feathered breeds
Zinc, niacin, panthothenic acid	fraying of the ends of the feathers
folic acid	abnormal coloration of pigmented feathers

However, free-roaming home flocks with adequate feed probably won't have feather problems related to feed. Check [KSU publications MF2308](#) for other causes of feather loss.

6. Are roosters necessary in a laying flock?

No. Roosters are only needed in the flock when fertile eggs are desired. Increasing photoperiods (amount of light per 24 hours) is the factor that stimulates egg production in birds. Usually 16 hours of light per day (natural & artificial) will keep hens in lay, in Kansas.

7. What do the terms such as "Cornish-Rock" and "Austra-White" mean?

These are names used for two popular crossbreeds of chickens. The first part of the name signifies the male parent, the latter part the female parent. Thus Cornish-rock, a popular broiler cross, is a cross between a White Cornish male and a White Plymouth Rock female. A cross between a Black Australorp male and White Leghorn female is called Austra-White. Similar terminology is used for other crosses. The terms "sex-sal" or "sex-link" indicate a crossbreed that has a visible physical characteristic, such as feather color, that is carried on the sex chromosomes. The sex of the day-old chicks can be determined by differences in down color.

8. What is the annual egg production of various species of poultry maintained under good management conditions?

<u>Type</u>	<u>Cycle Length</u>	<u>Eggs Per Cycle</u>
Egg-type chicken	12 months	240-270
Dual-purpose chickens	12 months	220-240
Meat-type chickens	280 days	145-185
Turkeys	150 days	90-120

Ducks	6-12 months	120-300*
Geese	3 months	20-40

\*Higher value represents egg-type ducks such as Indian Runner and Khaki Campbell breeds.

9. Can Chickens, pheasants, and turkeys be successfully crossed?

Chickens and pheasants have been successfully crossed but the hatchability rate is low. The progeny of this cross are usually sterile. Chickens and turkeys will not cross. Some people have the misconception that the "Turkan" breed of chickens is the result of a cross between a chicken and a turkey. The Turkan is a breed of chicken whose neck is void of feathers due to a genetic condition called "naked neck."

10. Where can I find career information about finding a job in the Poultry Industry?

Write to: Midwest Poultry Consortium  
 #191, 13033 Ridgedale Drive  
 Minneapolis, MN 55343

11. Where can I obtain chicks and supplies in Kansas?

See our new KSU publication called [Resource Guide for Owners of Small Poultry Flocks MF2310](#)

12. How old will my chickens live?

Of course, the answer depends a lot on the breed of chicken and how well they've been managed. On average, I'd say the life span of a chicken will be 5-6 years, but I've seen them live longer. The smaller breeds will live the longest. The heaviest breeds have a tendency to become too heavy which causes foot and leg problems. However, that does not mean that they will still be laying. Most laying hens will lay good numbers of quality eggs for 2-3 cycles at one cycle per year.