# How to Raise Meat Chickens

*A Myers Poultry guide for planning, feeding, and caring for broilers*

## PLANNING

***BREED***

What breed you choose depends on your goals. Cornish cross chickens are fast and the most feed-efficient, but there are many breeds to choose from.

***TIME OF YEAR***

Meat birds are best raised in spring and fall, when temperatures are more moderate.

***QUANTITY***

Estimate how many whole chickens your household would like to eat per week. Next, decide to raise your birds in one go or split into separate batches.

We suggest beginners start with 15-25 birds for their first batch.

## 0-4 WEEKS*

***HOUSING***

Chicks should be in a dry, draft-free brooder with access to feed, water, and heat.

***WATERING***

Spread waterers out around the brooder at a rate of one 1 gallon waterer per 25 chicks.

***FEEDING****

Offer chicks constant access to broiler starter feed that is high in protein.

If raising Cornish Cross or other fast-growing broilers, keep broilers on a 12 hours on, 12 hours off feeding schedule after the first week until processing to reduce health risks.

## 4+ WEEKS

***HOUSING***

Birds can be housed indoors in barns or outdoors in pasture-based systems. Many resources suggest 1.5 to 3 sq. feet per bird.

***WATERING***

Never restrict water. Check waterers often, keep them full, and add additional access to water as the birds grow. Offer more water during hot weather.

***FEEDING****

Feed meat birds a broiler-specific grower or finisher feed and continue to do so until processing.

**Depending on conditions, birds may be able to move to the next stage a week earlier.*

***Optimal feeding schedule and protein percentage recommendations may be different depending on the breed. Consult your hatchery for their recommendations.*

## PROCESSING

Process birds within the typical age range for their breed. Plan your butcher date in advance and schedule ahead.

Some birds may need processed earlier if they show signs of stress or becoming too top-heavy. Delaying processing increases health risks and feed waste.

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