

## Where to Purchase Chickens & Some General Points

There are many sources of poultry and lots of different breeds and varieties to choose from. When selecting the breed and number of birds you want, it is important to consider the type and size of accommodation you have and also what you want the birds for; breeding, showing, meat, laying eggs or pets.

Many people take on ex-commercial laying birds once they have come to the end of their production lives. These make great pets and will still continue to produce eggs. They also normally have the benefit of being fully vaccinated. Another option is to consider point of lay birds (POL) at 16 weeks of age. Private breeders and some markets will sell the more specialised breeds of poultry. A chicken's lifespan is about 5-7 years, but some breeds can live much longer; up to 12 years.

If you have not had chickens before, try not to be too ambitious with numbers, 2-4 birds is a good starting point. More can be added later if desired.

Many breeders will also be trying to give away or sell cockerels, which make a nice addition especially if you are thinking about breeding your own chickens. Remember cockerels can also be noisy and generally have a protective nature, so if you live close to others or have young children it may not be appropriate.

If you are adding new birds to your flock, consider quarantining them for 2-3 weeks to make sure they are not carrying any disease that may be passed on. Birds are very good at disguising disease. Quarantining would involve keeping your new birds completely separate to your current flock.

It is important to note that if you have over 50 birds you must register your flock with DEFRA, if your number is below this then registration is optional, but recommended.

