

SUBJECT

The Life of Broiler Chickens

TOPIC

The Chickens who lay the Eggs

FOCUS

Grades K-2

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the lesson, the students are expected to:

-  Understand the difference between a table egg and a hatching egg.
-  Identify terms such as hen, rooster, flock, and a fertilized egg.
-  Connects food to real people: highlight the careful work farmers do to keep animals safe and healthy.

MATERIALS

- Youtube video:
<https://youtu.be/TNVIB7-uwcs>
- Activity Sheet

REFERENCES

- Time stamps for the YouTube video:
- 0:00 (start) - 1:33

INTRODUCTION

Many students assume the eggs they eat for breakfast are the same ones that hatch into fluffy chicks. This lesson naturally explains the difference between table eggs and fertilized hatching eggs. The lesson will also explore what a broiler breeder farm looks like and the requirements necessary for producing a broiler breeder hatching egg.

DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

Q: I bought this egg at the grocery store yesterday. If we put this egg in a warm spot, will a baby chicken someday pop out?

A: The eggs we buy at the grocery store for breakfast come from farms where only hens (females) live. To get a baby chick we need a special kind of farm where mother hens and father roosters live together as a team. This is called a broiler breeder farm.

Q: How old is a pullet before it becomes a hen and is ready to lay egg?

A: Generally, a pullet is considered a hen at 16 weeks and will start to lay eggs.



DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS CONTINUED

Q. Do Hens lay eggs every day?

A. Broiler Breeder hens generally lay 150-180 eggs per year (one every other day). Table Egg Hens lay more eggs and can lay up to 250-300 eggs per year (almost one per day)

Q. Are broiler breeder hens and roosters in cages?

A. No, you can see from the video that broiler breeder flocks are free to roam the barn and move as much as they want to.

Q. How do they sleep?

A. Broiler breeder farms have 2 different zones or areas. A scratch area with sawdust and another area with "slats". These slats sit higher than the scratch area, and so the birds generally like to sleep there. Birds like to sleep in elevated areas because they have an instinct to seek high ground to protect themselves from predators.

Q. Are they inside all the time?

A. Yes, the broiler breeder flocks live inside. There are many other animals that enjoy chicken for dinner. Can you think of other animals that eat chicken? dogs, coyotes, wolves, raccoons, hawks, eagles, foxes, bobcats, cougars, owls, skunks, bears, and weasles all eat chicken!

Q. How many hatching Farms are there in BC?

A. Currently there are 55 hatching egg farms in BC. Together they produce over 10 million dozen broiler hatching eggs for broiler farms. BC is the 3rd largest hatching egg producer in Canada.

Q. What does a Farmer do each day?

A. A farmer has a lot of responsibility to make sure the hens and roosters have the right barn conditions to produce a hatching egg. For example, hens need 14-16 hours of light each day. If they drop below 12, it reduces the egg production in the hens. A farmer will walk the barn several times a day and look for signs that show them the birds are healthy and happy. If the birds are not happy in their environment, they simply stop laying eggs! They really don't handle stress well, and so their environment must be pretty much perfect. It's a big job for farmers to monitor the birds and learn how to manage their needs effectively.

VOCABULARY

- Pullet: a young female under 16 weeks (4 months) old that isn't mature enough to lay an egg.
- Hen: a matured female chicken who lays eggs.
- Rooster: a matured male chicken, who, with the hen, fertilizes eggs.
- Fertilized egg: An egg that has both a Rooster (father) and a hen (mother); which, under specific conditions, will produce a chick
- Nesting Box: Private quiet boxes where hens lay eggs.
- Hatchery: A building that is designed with the perfect environment for hatching eggs.
- Flock: Hens and roosters living together.
- Feeders: pans that hold chicken feed off the ground. Feed runs through an auger system that delivers the food automatically to the chickens.
- Predator: an animal that hunts and eats other animals for food.

FINAL REVIEW

- Broiler breeder farmers care for all parts of their birds' environment to make sure they are at their happiest and healthiest when producing fertilized eggs.
- For eggs to produce chicks, hens and roosters need to live in the same barn, and this only happens at broiler breeder farms.
- Farmers protect their flocks from dangers like predators, sickness, and other birds, by keeping them in a clean barn and checking on the birds multiple times a day.

ENGAGEMENT

- Complete Poultry Farm Activity Sheet. Ask students to identify the items listed at the bottom of the page in the picture.
- Find the difference between a pullet, hen and rooster in the handout.

