WHO’S THAT BIRD?

Did you know that poultry have different names throughout their life cycle depending on their species?

CHICKENS
- Male: Rooster
- Young Male: Cockerel
- Female: Hen
- Young Female: Pullet

TURKEYS
- Male: Tom
- Young Male: Jake
- Female: Hen
- Young Female: Jennie

POULTRY HAVE TO EAT, TOO!

Many of us have walked through the grocery store and seen a sign that reads, “Chicken with NO Hormones.” Did you know that chickens never receive hormones? Hormones in chickens were outlawed by the United States government in the 1950s. Adding hormones in chickens or turkeys is still illegal in the United States.

What are the crops that poultry eat?

Photo courtesy of National Chicken Council

Photo courtesy of Texas A&M University Poultry Science
A chicken’s life begins in a hatchery where fertilized eggs are incubated and then hatched. Once hatched, they are transported to farms where they are raised until sold for meat production.

The Broiler Farm  
(Grow Out Farm)  
• They grow to market weight in about 6-8 weeks.  
• Unlimited feed and water is provided.  
• Temperature, humidity and ventilation are carefully controlled.  
• When the chickens are large enough to be sold for meat consumption, they are transported to the processing plant where they are harvested.

The Processing Plant  
The chickens are taken to the processing plant to be harvested into the products that we regularly consume.

What differences do you observe in the two types of chickens?  
Write your answers below.
Clean housing is very important for chickens to grow and be healthy. Modern-day chicken houses are very complex. The health and safety of chickens is of great importance, so there are many safety features present in today’s chicken houses.

The houses are large and open for chickens to roam freely. Temperature is crucial and can affect how well the chickens grow. The houses are equipped with large tunnel fans that circulate air and keep the temperature exactly where it needs to be.

Feeders have a built-in sensor that detects when the feeders need to be filled up with nutrients that chickens need. Just like for humans, water is an essential nutrient for chickens. Clean water is provided to the chickens in water troughs throughout the house 24/7. Chickens also receive a very specific diet that aligns with their nutritional needs. Farmers have feed bins near the chicken houses that store the feed and allow farmers to have easy access to the exact feed and the proper amounts at all times.

Chickens are easily susceptible to disease if the proper steps are not taken. To help ensure diseases don’t enter chicken houses, farmers must always step into a footbath that sanitizes their shoes before ever entering the houses. This is part of a biosecurity plan, and it is a top priority for chicken farmers.

**GEOGRAPHY OF TEXAS POULTRY PRODUCTION**

Do you see a difference in the number of areas that chickens are raised in the state compared to other crops? If you said yes, you are correct! Broiler and layer chickens are mostly (but not exclusively) produced in East Texas due to water availability, convenient transportation in relation to highways and railroads, and space to name a few.
Some eggs are fertilized and will produce a chick, but other eggs are unfertilized. We call those table eggs, and they’re what we eat for breakfast and use to make yummy treats like cake and cookies!

The poultry industry uses a technique called candling to analyze the quality of the egg. Candling helps you see the white, the yolk, and the air cell. The smaller the air cell, the better the quality of the egg.

**TRY IT AT HOME!**

What you need:
• Eggs  • 1 flashlight

Hold the egg up and shine the flashlight on the bottom of the egg. The light should allow you to see right through the egg. If you look closely, you’ll likely be able to identify some of the parts of the egg from the diagram! Candling also allows you to see the air cell size. If the air cell is large, that means the egg is less fresh than one with a smaller air cell.

Photo courtesy of Texas A&M University Poultry Science

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