



Introducing new birds to an existing flock

Key Points:

- Allow the existing flock to see the new chickens from a distance
- Introduce the new chickens to the coop
- Provide space and diversions
- Provide additional food and water stations
- Intervene if necessary

Introducing new bird to your existing flock can be stressful for everyone. Until the chickens' natural hierarchical social system (pecking order) has been re-established, the new birds can be bullied remorselessly.

However, it's not impossible to integrate new birds into an existing flock and below we outline some key stages to help ease the process.

1. Allow the existing flock to see the new chickens from a distance

If possible, put the new chickens in a separate house and run near to the existing flock for a week or so, so that the original chickens get used to their presence. If you don't have the ability to do this, skip this step and start with step 2.

2. Introduce the new birds to the coop

It is best to do this in the evening when the birds are at their quietest. Once the existing flock has roosted, pop the new birds on to the roosts next to them. In the morning, let them out and just keep your eye on them.

There may be some pecking and scrapping, but they should settle into a new pecking order in around a week.





3. Provide space and diversions

If you can, allowing your flock to free range will give the new additions room to escape any attacks. It's also a good idea to provide plenty of diversions such as hanging corn on the cobs up, giving them some greens – anything that may distract them from bullying the new hens.

4. Provide additional food and water stations

Ensure that the new chickens are not prevented from getting to food and water by providing additional feeders and drinkers whilst they are settling in.

5. Intervene if necessary

If any of your chickens are being attacked to the point of causing injury, it will be necessary for you to intervene. Split up the fighting birds – you may have to do this several times. If the offender continues to attack, remove her and isolate her for a couple of days. When you reintroduce her, she shouldn't attack the new chickens as much.

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