

Heritage Chicken Feed Guidelines

The Livestock Conservancy

www.livestockconservancy.org

Feed requirements: Heritage breeds of chicken (especially heavy or dual purpose breeds) require a more nutritionally complete feed ration than their commercial counterparts, in order to fully achieve their potential size and productivity. Many of the common rations found in feed stores are formulated for commercial hybrid birds which are selected to grow well with less protein in their diets. Often producers can find appropriate levels of protein for Heritage chicks in game bird or turkey starter and grower diets.

To best manage the nutritional requirements of Heritage chickens the following feeding schedule is recommended:

Hatch to 8 weeks of age: approximately 26-28% protein content *game bird starter ration*.

8 weeks of age to 12 weeks of age: approximately 22-24% protein content *game bird grower ration*.

12 weeks to until point of lay (24 weeks): approximately 18-20% protein content *layer/broiler grower ration*.

Point of lay (24 weeks) to end of laying cycle: approximately 16-18% protein content *layer ration*. A little higher protein content keeps the bird healthier in times of heat/cold stress, and better maintains condition of the heavier bodied heritage laying hens. The layer ration has a higher calcium percentage than the grower ration at a max of 8% and a minimum of 5%.

Breeder ration: When collecting eggs for hatching from breeding stock attention to detail in nutrition is especially important and the addition of a nutrient/probiotic supplement can assist in increasing fertility and hatchability. Overall, feeding the breeder flock should fall into the general guidelines for the layer flock at approximately 16-18% protein content *layer ration*, with calcium at a max of 8% and a minimum of 5%.

NOTE:

1. Homemade or custom milled feed rations can be supplemented with alfalfa meal or fish meal to achieve higher protein content.
2. Field peas, sunflower seed, oats, barley, and milo all make good scratch grains or alternative feed grains to corn and soy.
3. Aragonite can be added to increase calcium content.
4. A high quality nutrient/probiotic supplement can be used to improve overall nutritional profile (vitamins, minerals, probiotics). *Use according to product labeling & guidelines.
5. The use of apple cider vinegar (ACV) in the drinking water (1% of total volume or 1-6 Tbs. ACV per gallon) is helpful in controlling heat stress, improving bird vigor, helping control internal parasites, and increasing rate of lay. *As reported by independent farmers using ACV in their flocks.