Home Composting Rebate Program: Chicken Keeping

Austin Resource Recovery
Zero Waste

Compostables make up 40% of the waste stream

City Council’s benchmark goals

- Department milestones
ARR Services

- Recycling
- Trash
- Yard trimmings
- Street sweeping
- Hazardous waste
- Large Brush
- Bulk
ARR Carts

To change your Cart Size Call 494-9400

96-gallon $41.85
64-gallon $23.30
32-gallon $18.15
24-gallon $16.90

*Includes base fee of $13.05
Curbside Organics Expansion

Organics Pilot

• Currently 14,000 customers
• 3rd green organics cart
• Weekly collection
• Expanding city wide over the next 4 years
### The Rebate Process

**austintexas.gov/composting**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</table>
| **Step 1** | Purchase a chicken coop from *any retailer* of your choosing.  
 (*Can only be used for Chicken Coop or Chicken Coop Kit, not accessories, chickens, or building materials)* |
| **Step 2** | Submit a rebate application with copies of your receipt.  
 (*Only one Rebate PER Household: Either Home Compost Rebate OR Chicken Keeping Rebate)* |
| **Step 3** | Receive a $75 rebate check from the City of Austin by mail. *  
 (*Please allow a minimum of 8 weeks for processing)* |
Keeping Chickens 101
Why Chicken Keeping?

• Reduce trash and help Austin reach Zero Waste
• Save Money
• Natural insect control
• Build topsoil
• “Green” material for compost
• Grow healthy, vibrant plants.
• Free Eggs!
• Education and entertainment
SAVE KITCHEN SCRAPS TO FEED THE HENS!

KITCHEN WASTE

KEEP IT DRY. FREE FROM GLASS, METAL, BONES, PAPER, ETC. IT ALSO FEEDS PIGS......YOUR COUNCIL WILL COLLECT.

Source: nationalarchives.gov.uk
Austin Chicken Math

• An average American throws away about ½ lb. food/daily (approximately 200lbs/year)

• An average size chicken can be put that food to good use through supplemental food source (when fresh) and composting.

So what?

Chickens can be waste stream diverters in a big way!
Austin Chicken Math for Food Waste alone

If even 1% of households (3,100) in Austin kept chickens...

Average 2.37 persons/household

3,100 households x 2.37 persons/household x .5 pound wasted food/person x 365 days =

We could conservatively divert over **1.3 MILLION POUNDS** of food alone from the landfill each year!

**IMAGINE AUSTIN** with 50% of households raising chickens??
More diversion with Output:
Black Gold

- Average size hen produces 1 cubic foot of manure every six months
- For each 100 lb. feed consumed, expect 45 lb. droppings dried weight
- Deposits high in NPK
- 10 chickens poop less than 1 “average” sized dog
So What Else?

38.1% Austin MSW from yard trimmings

Yard Trimmings + Chicken Manure = Compost!

Divert 27 tons yard trimmings
Over $2M savings
Chicken Compost = Building Topsoil

• Losing topsoil faster than we can replenish it

  **Chickens to the rescue!**

• Waste serves to super-charge the compost pile—highest fertilizer value of all livestock manure
• Scratching and pecking loosen Austin’s heavy soils
• Healthy garden soil not only grows better plants and vegetables but also holds water better and reduces erosion.
A Gardener’s Best Friend

• Soil Aeration
• Black Gold!
• Eat most any bugs – crickets, grasshoppers, roaches, snails, slugs, earwigs, beetles
• Will also eat small reptiles...for better for worse
Education and Entertainment

- Children learn and appreciate where food comes from
- Teaches responsibility and awareness for animals and our food
Chickens: Inputs and Outputs

**INPUT**
- Food
- Water
- Air
- Shelter
- Dust
- Grit
- Buddies

**OUTPUT**
- Meat
- Eggs
- Feathers
- Manure
- Methane
- CO2

**BEHAVIORS**
- Scratching
- Foraging
- Flying
Chickens and AUSTIN CODE

Know your local codes:
Must comply with all sections of Title 3 (Animal Regulation)

- Can’t roam free (3-2-1)
- Can’t make excessive noise (3-2-2)
- Must be kept in clean and healthy condition (3-2-5)
- Fowl must be kept in an appropriate enclosure no closer than 50 feet to a neighboring structure other than that of the birds’ owner or handler (3-2-16)
- Maintain property in a sanitary condition (10-5-21)

Also check any HOA or neighborhood specific regulations.
Definitions

- **ENCLOSURE** means a pen, cage, coop, loft, stable, shed, structure or enclosure used to house a bird, fowl, livestock, or other animal.

- **FOWL** includes a chicken, turkey, goose, guinea hen, or duck.

- **OWNER** means a person who owns, feeds, keeps, maintains, or harbors an animal or who knowingly allows an animal to remain on the person’s property.

- **HANDLER** means a person who has charge, care, custody, or control of an animal.
Chicken Breeds

• Size- Standard or Bantam?
  o Standard- eat a lot, lay medium-large eggs
  o Bantam- eat much less, lay smaller eggs

• Pure or crossbred?
  o Hybrids/crossbreeds are often the best egg layers and fastest growers
  o Purebreds, “designed” to fill specific niches/environments

• Others things to consider
  o Climate, Kids
Chicks or Pullets/Hens?

- **Chicks** are generally under a week or so old
- **Pullets** are female chickens under 1 year of age
- **Hens** are female chickens 1 year or older in age
- **Cockerels** are male chickens under 1 year of age
- **Cocks** (“roosters”) are male chickens 1 year or older in age
# CHICKS VS. PULLETS/HENS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chicks</th>
<th>Pullets/Hens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More sources from which to purchase and broader breed selection available</td>
<td>Less sources and variety at this age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly more intensive early care</td>
<td>More ready to go “out of the box”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer time until first egg – but you know exactly what went into making that egg</td>
<td>Generally faster to that first egg for breakfast</td>
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</tbody>
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Integration to Existing Flock

• Keep new birds in quarantine a minimum of 28 days
  – Do not integrate if signs of illness

• Ideally introduce a minimum of 2 birds to flock at time

• Have similar size introductions best

• Introductions on roost in night
Types of Coops

• A *brooder* is temporary housing with reliable heat source until chicks feathered out.

• A *coop* is permanent housing for a feathered out chicken.

• A *coop and run* is permanent housing for chickens that also includes an enclosed outdoor fenced space for daytime use.

• A *chicken tractor* is mobile housing that includes a coop and small run space.
Things to Consider...

- Space availability
- How much access to garden/yard
- Predators in your area
- Climate and seasons
Getting Started...

Coop and Run Essentials

• Adequate space and light- (min 2-3sf/per chicken inside coop, 8-10sf/per chicken in run, more space the better!)
• Predator protection
• Weather protection (from moisture and drafts)
• Good ventilation in coop
• Essential elements (roosts, nest boxes, feed, water, etc.)
Additional Coop Considerations

• **Roosts** should ideally be 18” – 24” from ground
  – This should be the highest perch point of coop

• **Nest boxes** of 12” x 12” minimum for standard size bird with privacy but good ventilation
  – Can be wider – consider extra space for Texas heat
  – 1 nest box to approx. 4 birds

• **Make sure feeder and waterer sanitary**
  – Key to keeping birds healthy is healthy environment

• **Add fresh bedding, clean coop as needed** to keep right environment – not too wet or dry
  – Don’t use Cedar shavings!

• **Easy access** for birds and consider for humans, too!
Predator Protection

• THE KEY to successful backyard flocks

• Make sure your coop is PREDATOR PROOF!
  – Chicken wire will not keep out predators
  – Use ¼ in. hardware cloth

• Wire or barrier at coop edges
Compost and Chicken Runs

- Can build your compost pile inside coop and run.
- Let chickens do all the turning for you.
- Limits chicken scratching/denuding on yard.
- Need to keep fresh materials coming in.
Chicken Tractor

- Mobile – distributes chicken manure and builds healthy topsoil when moved regularly.
- Can be smaller footprint.
- Good way to get flock access to fresh pasture while still protected.
“Victory Garden” style.
(Double Run Chicken System)

Source: Ecofilms Australia
Chicken Moat

- Double fencing, creating chicken run around garden.
- Garden pest control
- If not too wide, difficult for aerial predators to swoop.

Source: Mrs. Fancy Pants, BackyardChickens.com
Recap: Coop Checklist

✓ Predator Protection
✓ Food and Water
✓ Ventilation
✓ Nest boxes
✓ Roosts
✓ Bedding Material

✓ Adequate spacing
✓ Access (doors)
✓ Seasonal element design
✓ In compliance with City Ordinances
Chicken Care
Chicken Feed

• The type of feed you provide your birds is based on age and purpose (laying, meat, or show)

• Chickens Need
  o Energy - Carbs and Fats
  o Proteins to develop - Pellets and crumbles most convenient way to supply
  o Grit- Insoluble sand, small stones, limestone, oyster shells, etc. allows bird to grind up food in gizzard
# Food for Egg Laying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feed Type</th>
<th>Approx. % Protein</th>
<th>Chicken Age</th>
<th>Approx. Amount per Hen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chick Starter</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0 – 6 weeks</td>
<td>1 lb. week/chick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicated or Non-Medicated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pullet Developer</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>7 – 18 weeks or until lay</td>
<td>1.15 lb week/pullet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>Once pullet laying</td>
<td>0.25 lb day/bird</td>
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Medicated chick starter is to prevent Coccidiosis, the most common form of death among chicks.

Amount of feed required may vary by individual bird and/or environmental conditions.

Birds for harvesting or show have different dietary requirements than those raised for eggs.
Types of Chicken Feed

• **Course Grains** - Easiest form to buy, good scatter feed

• **Pellets and Crumbles** - Most artificial type of feed, but most convenient for growing and laying

• **Mash** – Wet, Traditional feed of powdered grains/meals and liquid (water, milk, meat soup, etc.)

• **Chicken Scratch** is NOT feed, but a treat and should be provided sparingly, if at all.
  – It has “energy” for the birds and can raise their body temperature. Keep this in mind during summer heat.
Types of Chicken Feed

• **Insects** - Lay boards on the ground and turn over after a few days

• **Green Forage** - Makes yolks yellower, provide extra nutrients, exercise, and entertainment for birds (lawns, hanging baskets, alfalfa, comfrey, clovers, etc.)

• **Scraps** - Reduces waste. Keep fresh, don’t feed moldy, do your research some can be poisonous to birds
Scraps to Avoid for Chickens

- Onion/garlic can change flavor of eggs
- Tea leaves, coffee grounds, rhubarb leaves, soap, salt or salted products
- Citrus juice and skins, avocado skin/pit, fish, sugary products (candy, chocolates)
- Dried or raw beans/rice
- Unripe/leaves of tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants
**Water**

- Constant supply of fresh, accessible water key to good health
- In summer keep waterer in shade, especially if plastic
- For chick care, do not use open dish – chicks can drown
  - Shallow dish with marbles or pebbles if needed
Quick Guide: Chicken Health

• Dust Baths
• Clipping Wings - if flying over fences
• Stress
• Heat and Cold
• Broody Hen: When a hen's hormones tell her it's time to incubate eggs
• Health Issues: Worms, Fleas, Mites, Diarrhea “dirty pants”, Egg Binding
Don’t be too concerned…

- **Molting** - feather loss once a year in mature chickens
- **Young layers** - eggs with thin or no shell
- ** Older layers** – wrinkled, rough, thin shell
- **Pecking Order** - ensure plenty of space in coop/run
Want more? Get Funky!

- 10th Annual Funky Chicken Coop Tour

AustinCoopTour.org
Questions?

composting@austinrecycles.com

Austin Resource Recovery