Chickens – The Pecking Order

Chickens are very social and when first introduced have skirmishes with each other to establish a pecking order; a ranking system with the top birds picking on those that are lower ranking then themselves in their flock. Once the pecking order is established skirmishes virtually disappear as there is an order of rankings at that point however, adding new birds disturbs the order and fighting may once again appear.

# Introducing New Birds

When introducing any new chickens that have not hatched or have been shipped directly to your home, it is strongly recommended to quarantine the new arrivals for a minimum of 14 days to prevent diseases. After this period of time has passed, allow both different groups of chickens to see each other but, not directly interact with each other. This can be accomplished by simply separating your coop or run for a period of time, whether it be with a cage or dividing the run. Some advise this process to be continued for a week.

When first introducing chickens some may suggest introducing the new flock when it is nighttime, with drowsy birds while others may simply put the birds together when it is bright outside and hope that all goes smoothly. When doing either option, it is advised to be around for the next few hours of light to make sure the fighting isn’t “viscous”. Nevertheless usually after a few days the flock settles down.

## Introducing Birds of Different Ages, Genders and Breeds

When introducing birds of different ages, make sure they are of a similar size and thus would have a chance if disagreements would break out. Thus, mixing a year old bird with a month old chick is not advisable. If one needs to introduce younger chickens, introduce them in a larger number to hopefully prevent the older birds from picking one out.

Roosters are usually much more dominant then the hens and are much more likely to fight and draw blood where hens usually just bump each other. Just watch the roosters closely and only keep what you need; leaving ample room for those you keep.

## What Can Be Done to Make the Adjustment Easier

By providing plenty of room and perches as well as a number of feeders and waterers or by simply providing a distraction, such as a treat-toy, introducing new chickens can become easier.