

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION
OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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Notes: *Incubation and Embryonic Development* by Ohio State University Extension has detailed egg-production info. Find it online at <http://ohioline.osu.edu/b633/index.html>. OSU Extension's "The Making of an Egg" has short, sweet, step-by-step details and also labeled photographs (of the inside of an egg and of the parts of a chicken that make the eggs): <http://ohioline.osu.edu/vme-fact/0021.html>. "Incubation and Embryonic Development," University of Illinois Extension, offers egg-based learning activities for grades K-3, 4-6, 7-8 and 9-12: <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/eggs/about.html>. Actually, roosters aren't good with a bo staff.

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Q. Dear Twig: About those backyard chickens: Don't you need a rooster if you want them to lay eggs?

A. No. A chicken will lay eggs anyway if it's old enough (at least four to five months old) and gets enough light (at least about 14 hours a day). You need a rooster only if you want the eggs to be **fertile** — to be able to grow a chick inside. Which, if the eggs are only for eating, they don't have to be. The zoning laws in lots of cities don't let you have roosters anyway — too noisy.

Q. How many eggs do you get from a chicken?

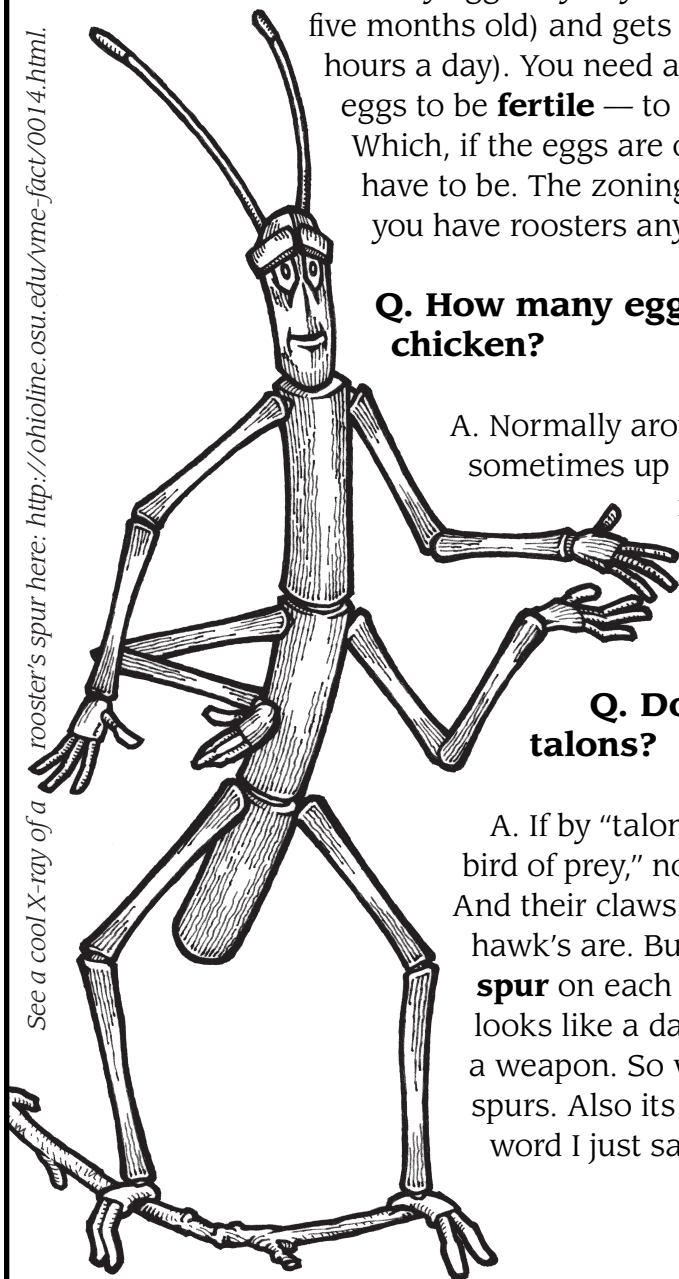
A. Normally around 250 to 270 a year but sometimes up to 300 a year, say fact sheets from Ohio State University and the University of Illinois. A lot depends on the age, breed and health of the chicken.

Q. Do the chickens have sharp talons?

A. If by "talons" you mean "the claws of a bird of prey," no. Chickens aren't birds of prey. And their claws aren't long and pointy like a hawk's are. But roosters have a thing called a **spur** on each leg. It's sharp and hard and looks like a dagger. The rooster can use it as a weapon. So watch out for a rooster's spurs. Also its bo staff. I don't understand a word I just said.

Twig

See a cool X-ray of a rooster's spur here: <http://ohioline.osu.edu/vme-fact/0014.html>.



From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (www.oardc.ohio-state.edu) and OSU Extension (extension.osu.edu).