

Backyard Poultry Nutrition

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Feed Represents about 70% of
the cost of raising chickens

Nutrients can be classified into six groups

- Water
- Carbohydrates
- Fats (lipids)
- Proteins and Amino Acids
- Vitamins
- Minerals.

The Most Important Food

WATER

Birds eat to meet their energy requirement

All other dietary nutrients, except water, must be provided based on the amount of energy that the bird will consume.

What to Feed?

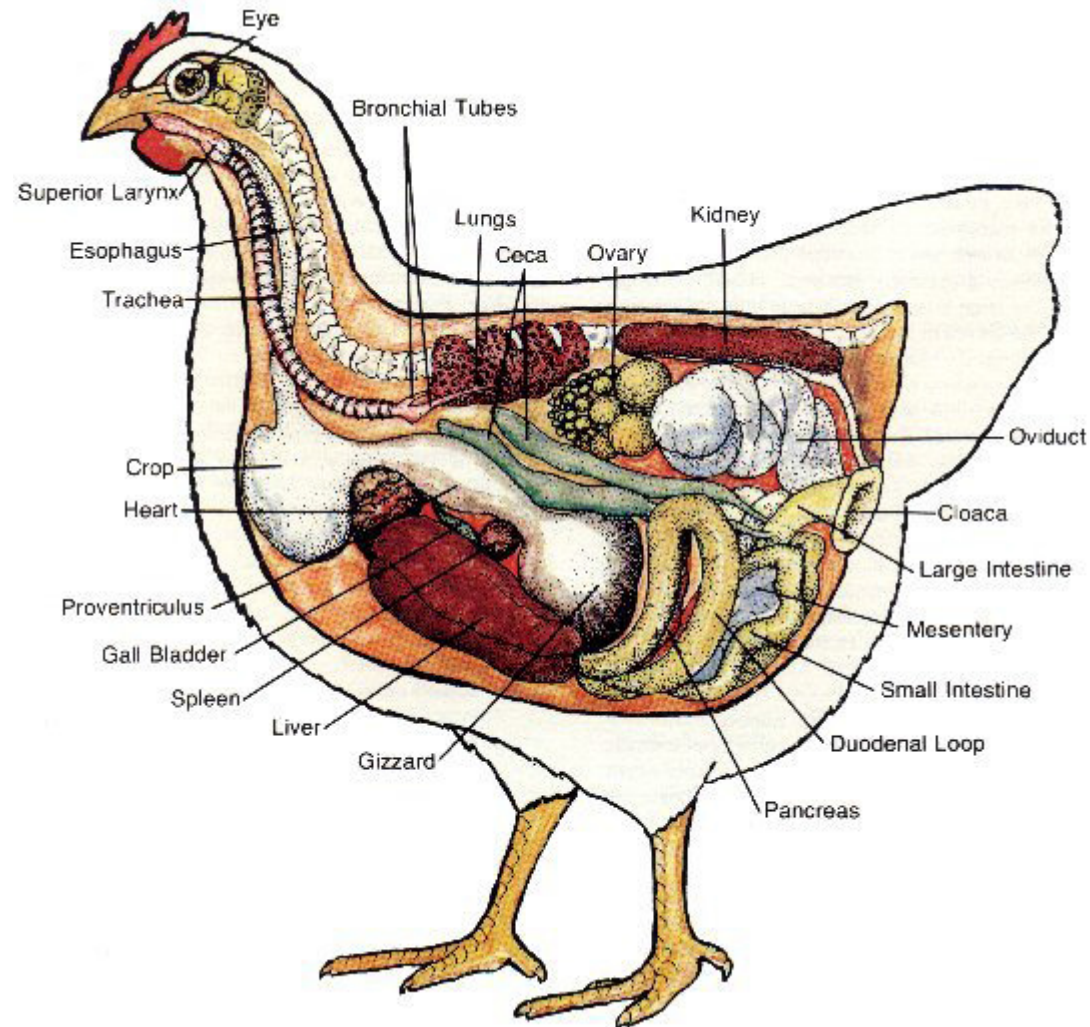
Nutrient requirements vary by age of bird and breed of chicken.

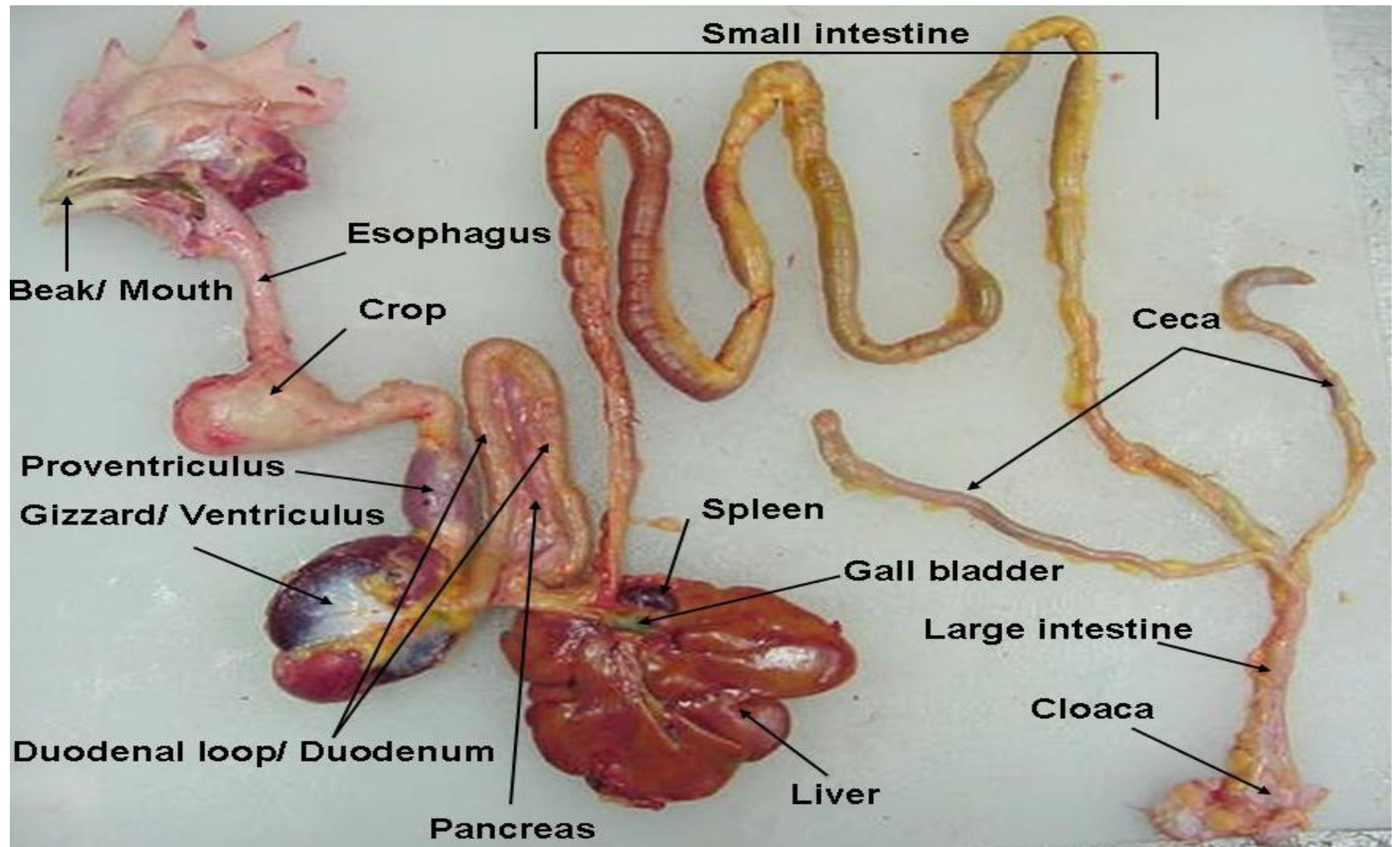
- Meat type birds require more concentrated feed, higher in protein and energy than layer type birds.
- Protein requirement is highest (20-23%) as newly hatched chicks and lowest (14-17%) as mature hens.
- Amino Acid balance must be met especially those essential that cannot be manufactured in the gut

The simplest way to feed a small flock of chickens is to purchase a complete diet

- Each bird meets its nutrient requirement
- Only one type of feed to purchase
- Should be fed free-choice
- Never let the birds be without feed
- No need for supplements

CHICKEN ANATOMY of the DIGESTIVE SYSTEM





Chickens have short digestive tracts, feed moves through the bird in about 4.5 hours.

- Do NOT give chicks oyster shell or limestone.
These are NOT grit.

Oyster shell and/or limestone are often given to laying hens to provide the extra calcium they need for egg shell formation. This extra calcium will cause bone development problems and kidney damage in chicks.

Grit Supplementation

- When free ranged or course grain like scratch-feed is fed Grit may need to be fed to help the bird grind it food.
- Because of the extreme acidity of the gizzard granite grit is recommended, oyster shell is a form of calcium and will dissolve rapidly.

Coccidiostat

- Added to feed of replacement pullets and Broilers
- Not labeled for layers
- Used to control coccidia
- When medicated feed is purchased as coccidiostat is the medication.
- Pros and cons

Feeder and Waterer

- Adjust height to top of chicken's back
- Adjust feeders so that feed is no more than half the height of the feeders sides
- Keep feeders and waterers clean
- Empty and clean feeders and waterers periodically
- Have enough feeder and waterer space so that all birds could eat and/or drink at the same time

Form of Feed

- Three form of complete Feed
 - Mash
 - Crumbles
 - Pellets
- All forms are mash, then compressed to crumble or pellets (increases cost of feed)
- Some advantage to Crumbles and Pellets (feed can't separate therefore bird get complete feed with every bite.)

Feed Handling

- Keep feed dry
- Keep feed fresh (<1 month in summer, <2 months in winter)
- Prevent rodents from getting to stored feed
- If bag feed stack on pallets to increase air circulation and reduce moisture
- Never feed moldy feed (toxins can be harmful)

Water

- Clean
- Cool
- <1000 ppm salt
- Always readily available within a short distance
- Used for metabolism and cooling
- Birds produce no urine, uric acid
- In hot weather fecal material becomes soupy from excessive water consumption

Weather Effect on Feed Intake

Extremes in weather, especially hot and humid, decrease feed intake resulting in a drop in production

Hints

- The more feed you can get into the bird the greater the production will be realized, layers or broilers.
- In hot weather simply stirring the feed in trough or adding a small amount of feed will stimulate the birds to eat.

Questions?

