



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

February 2014

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Greetings,

Although the recent

The Chicken and the Egg

Chickens are wonderful animals. They are amazingly complex with their hollow bones, intricate feathers, four-chambered heart, continuous air intake, high metabolism, complex brain, good hearing and superb color vision. Even their eggs are well designed. According to John D. Morris, Ph.D., the embryo nestles safely inside, surrounded and cushioned by amniotic fluid and nourished by the yolk. Metabolic wastes are insulated from the rest, while oxygen and carbon dioxide are exchanged across the hard but porous shell.

weather has certainly been invigorating, I hope you have found creative ways to stay warm and cozy. We are continuously thankful to the New Hampshire logging industry for the firewood and wood pellets helping to heat our home!

It is certainly a great time to make plans for your garden, your barn, your livestock and outdoor activities. If your garden will include seedlings started indoors, you might need to start some of those shortly. A few vegetables such as peppers, eggplant and celery need to be planted in early February so they are ready for transplanting to the garden in May. Be sure to include students in this process! It's a great opportunity to teach where some of their food comes from along



A New Hampshire Red

Modern domestic chickens are not the best flyers. Any hint of being aerodynamic has been bred out of them so that they don't stray far from home. Unfortunately, this helps to make them easy prey for

other animals such as fox, dogs, mink and snakes.

Chickens are omnivorous meaning that they eat both plant and animal matter. Although they are typically fed a grain mixture, they have been known to eat worms, bugs, mice and the occasional small lizard. It takes about 2 pounds of feed to produce 1 pound of body weight on a growing meat-type bird. So if a broiler weighs about 6 pounds at 10 weeks, it will have eaten about 12 pounds of feed.

Humans raise chickens to provide both eggs and meat. One of the reasons that chickens are so widespread is that many cultures have their own ways of preparing and consuming chicken. For instance, Americans love fried chicken, the British are very fond of roast chicken and the Chinese use all the parts of a chicken, including the feet in soup.

Random Chicken Facts

- Chickens have either 4 or 5 toes, depending upon the breed.

with lessons in plant development, seasons, the food chain and more. If you need some help, feel free to contact our office and we will connect you to some resources.

Best wishes,
Debbi

State Coordinator,
NH Ag in the Classroom

Calendar

Ag Literacy Day
March 25th, 2014

find us at:

NH Science Teacher's Symposium
March 22nd,
2014 Pinkerton
Academy in Derry

NEA-NH Spring Conference
April 5th, 2014
Bow High School

Contacts

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- Chickens are probably the most common bird in the world and are raised on every continent with an estimated worldwide population of 25 billion.
 - Egg shell color is determined by the breed of hen and is often related to the color of the feathers over the hen's ears. Brown hens typically lay brown eggs and white chickens lay white eggs (although there are a few breeds of white chickens with brown ear-feathers that lay brown eggs). The Ameraucana Heirloom hens even lay eggs with pastel blue shells. Note that the shell color is not related to the nutrition or quality of the egg inside.
 - Depending upon the breed, a single chicken can lay from 100 to 300 eggs per year. Most eggs are laid between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m.
 - At any given time, a productive hen will have eggs of several stages within her reproductive system.
 - Often a hen will sing "the egg song" before or after she lays an egg. Some will sing during the process of laying. It is a cheerful song that seems to be a proud announcement.
 - If you aren't sure how old an egg is, you can submerge it in water. The freshest eggs will remain at the bottom of the container, while old eggs will float. Floaters should either be discarded or opened far from your nose!
 - It is thought that the chicken was domesticated over 10,000 years ago.
 - Chickens are very social creatures and are happiest when surrounded by other chickens.
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NH Ag Literacy Day

New Hampshire Agriculture in the Classroom's annual Ag Literacy Day is coming up on March 25th. Join us by sharing this book with your local school by reading it in a classroom any day from mid-March through April.. This year's selection, *Down on the Farm: Chickens* by Hannah Ray's is appropriate for grades K-4. The book provides an introduction to chickens by taking a look at why they are farmed, anatomy, life cycles, different breeds, eggs and related customs. Also included are a glossary and some fun activities. Following the presentation, the book will be donated to the school library for continued enjoyment and learning. Please contact the Ag in the Classroom office if you are interested in helping promote agricultural literacy in our schools.

