

Why Chickens Are Crossing Into Backyard America

BY: MARK GLOVER -

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Backyard Chickens in Flower Mound, TX

There is a fast growing trend across America with people keeping backyard chickens. No one knows exactly how many backyard chickens there really are. Thousands if not millions of chickens are quietly tucked away in backyards across America, many in violation of local ordinances that have evolved to exclude them. For many other Americans, ‘why’ people would want backyard chickens is as great of a mystery as ‘why’ the chicken crossed the road. Here are some of the reasons why people want backyard chickens:

Sustainability & Back to Nature

Most of us are just one generation from a time when people had chickens and gardens in the city as well as in the country. Previous generations lived much more sustainable life styles and did not depend on fast food, packaged factory made food, or microwave ovens. The kitchen, breakfast table and dining table were social gathering places for families, where life was shared and sorted. Today, our grandmothers, and certainly great-grandmothers, could not identify much of what we eat as food or how we prepare and consume it.

The Victory Gardens of WWI and WWII were the result of a duty felt by Americans to be self sufficient, patriotic, and not waste valuable resources. The Federal Government printed posters to encourage Americans to plant Victory Gardens in World War I and II. One such poster stated, “Uncle Sam Expects you to Keep Hens and Raise Chickens”.



Victory Garden Poster to Keep Backyard Chickens

Today, people are re-connecting with a need for self-sufficiency, a desire for local healthy food, and a value system of living in a sustainable manner. Food security, resource conservation, buying local, and knowing where food comes from are all increasingly important. [USDA statistics](#) clearly indicate this movement as it pertains to food. Local Farmers Markets have increased from 1,755 in 1994 to 7,175 in 2011.

Healthy & Local Food

Fast and packaged foods are proving problematic to our health and the health of our families. Cancer, heart disease, diabetes, salmonella, and obesity are just a few of the health concerns. Studies revealing ever increasing problems with food supply emerge monthly. Many believe we are literally poisoning ourselves.

Factory Farms raise thousands to tens of thousands of chickens in a single barn, where living space for chickens are not much larger than the size of a hat box.



Factory Farm Chickens

These chickens never see the light of day and often live in filthy/cramped conditions. Antibiotics, pesticides, saline, chlorine, and many other unnatural substances are found in our super-market chicken. Fast food chicken is much, much worse.

In February of 2012, [NutritionalFacts.org](#) stated that one bucket of fast food chicken may exceed the EPA recommended allowance of arsenic in a glass of drinking water by 2000%. Two million pounds of arsenic

compounds are fed to chickens in the US per year by Factory Farms to kill internal parasites and give chicken meat a pinkish tinge. And it's not only the chickens. Eggs too contain this poison.

According to [Consumer Reports in 2010](#), two-thirds of whole broilers bought at stores nationwide harbored salmonella and/or campylobacter, the leading bacterial causes of food-borne disease.

Backyard chickens, on the other hand, forage on chemical free vegetation and insects.



Goldie & Ebony near their Chicken Tractor

Many backyard chicken owners augment their feed weed with Certified Organic Feed. Backyard chickens have less stress and are naturally healthier than Factory Farm chickens. They are also less susceptible to bird diseases, like Avian Flu. In 2006, the [Center for Disease Control](#) said, “When it comes to bird flu, diverse small-scale poultry farming is the solution, not the problem.”

Backyard chicken owners are able to eliminate or reduce Herbicides, Pesticides, and Fertilizers. Chickens provide natural pest control by eating fleas, ticks, grasshoppers, spiders, slugs, [mosquito larvae](#), and almost every other insect. Chickens even eat small mice and snakes.

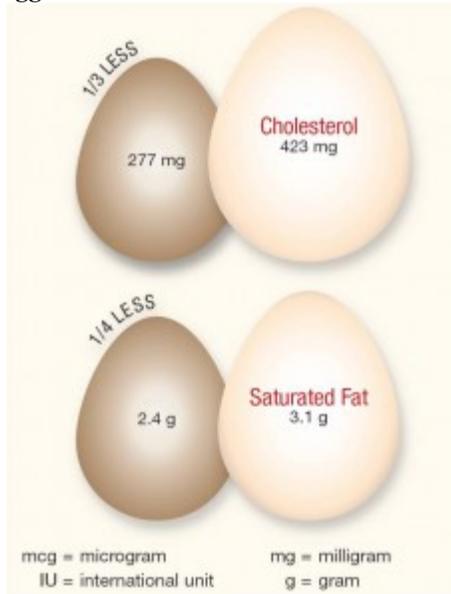
With all this foraging on natural foods, backyard chickens become organic chickens and produce fresh



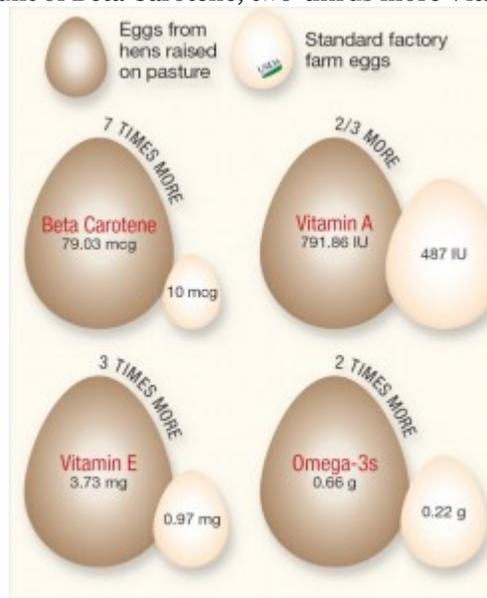
Fresh Organic Scrambled Eggs

organic eggs that are healthier and taste better. Backyard chicken enthusiasts swear by the better taste of their fresh eggs and chickens. Egg yolks are firmer, more yellow, and have a much richer flavor. Backyard

chickens owners claim it is hard to eat breakfast out anymore, after spoiling themselves with fresh organic eggs.



Pastured chickens (those raised naturally on grass and insects) have 1/3rd less Cholesterol and 1/4th less Saturated Fat than chickens raised in Factory Farms. Pastured chickens also have seven times the amount of Beta Carotene, two-thirds more Vitamins A, three times the



Vitamin E, and two times the Omega 3s.

Gardening

Gardening has surpassed all other hobbies to be the number one hobby in America and there are clear trends in how Americans do their gardening. The growth of backyard chickens is largely due to the growth of gardening. In fact, it is difficult to find a backyard chicken owner that does not garden also. There is a mutually beneficial relationship between chickens and gardens.

Gardeners are motivated by beauty, fresh food and healthy lifestyles. Chickens by nature peck and scratch, which is good for lawns and gardens. They eat harmful insects and fertilize as they go, adding nitrogen

back into the soil. Gardeners collect chicken droppings like they were gold nuggets from chicken pens and coops to add to compost for their gardens. Many say there is no better fertilizer than this compost mixture.

Chickens and gardening are a part of people's innate bond with living things, beauty, and nature called biophilia. Growing numbers of new gardeners are emerging and creating their healthy backyard oasis. All can be just and balanced the way God intended, within one's small backyard farm. Chickens fit like peas in this pod.

Entertainment & Children

The real bonus to having a small flock of backyard chickens is the countless hours of wholesome backyard entertainment. Chickens have unique personalities and are good with children when raised as pets. They greet you when you come out to visit them and often follow you around the yard. Chickens can be trained, held, walked on a leash, and become very gentle with attention.

Rob Paul, the Father of four small children in Flower Mound, TX explained what chickens have done for



his family, "Chickens have become a key distraction and quickly became our favorite pets. They have taught our children patience, responsibility and where food comes from. Our children have learned simple pleasures that don't emit from an iPod, iPad, iMac or iPhone". Many think of chickens as livestock, not pets. Families back on the farm usually did not make pets of chickens when their destiny was the stew pot. Chickens can be livestock or pets. It's up to the owner. Most pets are kept as layers and not destined to be table birds.

Chickens make excellent pets. People love their chickens just like they love other pets. Chickens also develop affection for people. Chickens, unlike most pets, actually work for a living. Chickens help with the lawn & garden, do the pest control, provide great entertainment, put themselves to bed at dusk, and provide a great healthy breakfast in the morning. No wonder so many backyards are being converted to mini-farms with backyard chickens.

Still, some will never understand 'why' others want backyard chickens. Backyard chickens aren't for everyone, any more than gardening or having dogs and cats are. However, it's everyone's right to garden,

keep dogs, or cats responsibly. Just as it should be everyone's right to responsibly keep a few backyard hens.

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About: [Mark Glover](#)

Mark Glover lives in Flower Mound, Texas with his wife Penny Rheudasil Glover. They have two wonderful sons. They call their 2.75 acre mini-farm Rheudasil Farms. Mark raises pet chickens for eggs and entertainment. Penny is an avid gardener and raises vegetables, herbs, and wildflowers. They have a prized crop of Texas Bluebonnets every Spring. They also raise Labs. When he isn't enjoying the mini-farm, Mark is a Commercial Real Estate Advisor and helps clients buy, sell, lease, develop and invest in commercial real estate. Call Mark at 214-550-5017 or email him at Mark@BackyardChickensHQ.com