

Rooster Adoption FAQs

• What type of shelter do they need?

If you own a barn, that will work! At night they often roost up high on a beam or a rafter, or may sit on the top rail of a gate or stall wall.

• How do I keep them from running away?

We treat the roosters similar to releasing feral cats. Have a nice big cage or crate ready to house them in, and for about four days to a week, take them out daily and hold them and pet them. Feed them and give them fresh water in their cage or crate, and give them dry bedding (straw or sawdust works great) and give them some environmental enrichment (chunks of grass with dirt and rocks in the roots is a favorite). When you finally open the door several days later for them to explore their new world, they will establish this as ‘their’ territory and will not wander far away. At night, they will most likely come back into the barn if they have easy access to come and go. My rooster even perches on top of the cage that he used to live in – I guess he thinks he gets a better view from up there!

• What do I feed them?

A commercial chicken scratch is recommended by several veterinarians that we work with to get them up to a healthy weight without getting other foods blocking or impacting their crop (the part of the chicken’s stomach where food is ground up). Later, you can offer them commercial scratch grains for variety, and they also like to eat fruit, such as strawberries, blueberries, grapes, or bits of watermelon. They are also foragers, and will constantly look through the grass for treasures that only they know about.

• What about winter?

Once you have established where your rooster likes to perch at night, you might want to consider securing a heat lamp near his perch for the cold winter temperatures. If you happen to choose a rooster who still has his comb intact, combs can indeed experience frostbite. However, completely preventing frostbite would prove to be a challenge. Providing the rooster with a heat source is just a nice thing to do, though many live comfortable lives without the additional luxury of warmth throughout the winter.

• I heard that chickens have lice.

Fact – most chickens will get lice at some point. Another fact – you will not get lice from your chickens. If any lice from any chicken were to get onto your skin, the second you wash – your hands, your hair, etc. – they are gone for good. Lice are species specific. Your chickens cannot give your goats lice, and your horse cannot give your chickens lice, and so on. The roosters being adopted from Happy Trails have all been de-liced already. It doesn’t hurt, however, to do a preventative dust bath for them twice a year – spring and fall – just to be safe. A de-licing powder can be purchased at any local farm store such as Tractor Supply or any feed store.

• Do they make good pets?

Chickens in general make fantastic pets. I personally have had chickens, ducks and geese for pets since I was three years old. The more you interact with your rooster, the friendlier and more trusting they become. We can teach you how to handle them safely, how to hold them, and how to make them feel safe and secure. Build your confidence by working with them as often as you can. We have some roosters who are super friendly to people.

- **Will they attack my hens?**

No, not normally. The cockfighting roosters are usually great with hens and will become protective of their little group of women. However, you should not put them together with other roosters or other dominant male birds, such as male turkeys. They even seem to get along well with ducks of any type. They simply can't be together with other roosters because they will indeed fight, and often will fight to the death.

- **How much does it cost to adopt a rooster?**

Absolutely nothing! We are grateful to the people who are considering adopting a rooster. If at some point you would like to make a donation in their honor to help the other feathered friends who come into the Happy Trails rescue program, we would be thrilled to accept a donation. However, that is not necessary or expected.

- **How do I start the adoption process?**

Call Happy Trails at 330-296-5914 and leave a message. An adoption counselor will call you back and talk with you about rooster adoptions and try to answer any questions you might have. If you both feel it will be a good fit, you are invited out to the sanctuary to pick out a new feathered friend for your family. There are currently over 70 to choose from – it's an overwhelming number to look at. There is every color and type imaginable – some big guys, some small cute little guys. All in serious need of homes before the hot weather sets in because right now they are being kept in cages/crates for their own safety at Happy Trails. Please help us spread the word!

- **What about predators?**

Predators for roosters include dogs, raccoons, coyotes, mink, weasels, and birds of prey. Know that if you let the rooster live free-range, there is the possibility that one of these predators could potentially attack your pet. However, due to the sheer number of roosters that have been rescued from three separate cockfighting raids recently, their chances of being adopted into the ideal situation is not realistic. At least in this way they are given their freedom, are not living in a cage, have the opportunity to spread their wings and enjoy their life, even if it might be shorter lived. It's a challenging position for us to be in as a rescue organization. At this point we would rather see them have an opportunity to live in someone's barn as opposed to be euthanized because there aren't enough homes to adopt the 70+ roosters still waiting to be chosen by a family.

Hope this helps!

Annette