

How To Train Chickens to Come on Command



The thing about learning this particular skill is that it's not difficult - in fact, it's a lot easier than most people could probably ever imagine.

While modern, domesticated chickens may be a relatively far cry from their wild ancestors, they retain one primitive characteristic:

A strong desire for food... and the will to do just about anything to get it. This is where the 'secret' behind getting chickens to respond to your call lies.

The Process

Essentially, what you're doing here really isn't all that far off from how you would train your dog, cat or even mouse to perform a particular trick - the obvious difference being that you're training a flock here.



Firstly, choose a reward that's special – not the chickens' regular feed. Dried meal worms and scratch grains are a good choice.

Whatever you choose, make sure you can sprinkle it around so that all of your chickens are able to get some. If you just drop one item like a piece of corn, the dominant bird in the pack is likely to be the only one who goes after it, leaving the others completely unconditioned as they got no part of the reward.

Secondly, you must choose what you'll be using to call the birds towards the reward.

While a bell and whistle are common choices, it might be much more interesting if you're able to call the chickens with your voice as you don't have to have a whistle with you to perform this trick on a whim.

If you choose to use your voice, make sure the call you're using is distinctive from your normal speaking voice. You want the birds to perk up at it when they realize that it's something unusual and could be indicative of a reward.

And now to begin teaching them the trick.

Holding the treat that you've chosen for the chickens, begin walking around their coop and making the sound of your call. Make sure they're able to see the full container of treats as you share it among them as this will help them associate the sight and sound with one another.

Do this several times a day - the more the better.

After several sessions of this, proceed as normal - only this time, hide the container of treats from the chickens as you make the call. If they head towards you and make moves as if they're anticipating a treat, you know your conditioning is working.

If not, don't worry, This could take weeks. But as soon as one bird gets it, the others will soon follow. If you're still having a bit of difficulty getting all the chickens to respond, make sure they are hungry before you call and condition them - otherwise, they'll have no real reason to respond to the stimuli. After a maximum of several weeks of practicing this properly, the chickens should all be responding to your call.

The advantages of learning this trick are far too numerous to mention, the most obvious of them being that your chickens will now return to their coop without much effort on your part.

This technique is also adaptable - you can even train multiple flocks to respond to different stimuli. This can be useful if you'd like to train new birds to go into a separate area so as to avoid bullying from the existing flock.

Essentially, the method for doing so is the same as for a regular flock - only you must keep the birds separate and aware that they are separate flocks. As soon as they begin to mingle, they will follow other birds, even if the stimuli and call aren't familiar to them. This is when you know that they have become accustomed to one another and it is safe for the pullets to be around the older birds, only requiring one call for your entire lot of birds.