

# Approximate Livestock Breeding Information

## Basic Livestock Breeding for Small-Scale Farms

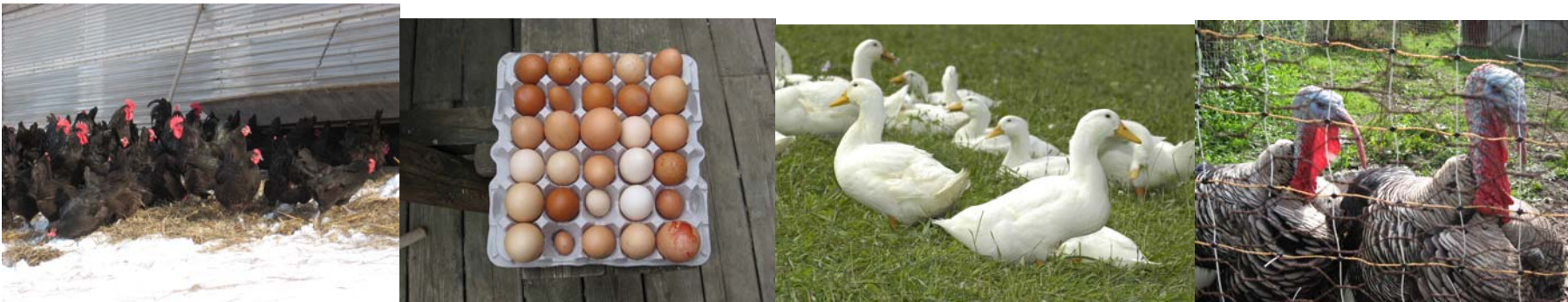
Live-stock	Female	Male	Young	Gestation	Young/ Gestation	Young/ Year	Cost of Male	Cost of Female	Male/Female Ratio	Breeding Life (years)	Live Cover Avail?	Cost Live Cover	AI Avail ?	Cost AI
<b>Egg Layers</b>	Hen	Roo-ster	Chick	21 days	10-15 eggs/set under hen	100-200 eggs for artificial incubation	\$5-\$25	\$15-\$25	Min 8:100	1-5	?	?	No	-
<b>Ducks</b>	Duck	Drake	Duck-ling	28 days	9-11 eggs/set under hen	100-200 eggs for artificial incubation	\$5-\$25	\$5-\$25	Min 1:6	1-3	?	?	No	
<b>Turkeys</b>	Hen	Tom	Poult	28 days	10-12 eggs/set under hen	40-50 eggs for artificial incubation	\$15- \$50	\$15-\$50	Min 1:16	1-5	?	?	No	
<b>Hogs</b>	Sow	Boar	Piglet	3 months 3 weeks 3 days	6-10	12-20	\$100- \$500	\$200 \$1,000	Min 1:10 AI 1:25+	Boar 3-5 Sow 3-6	Boar Hire Rare	?	Yes For some breed s	\$15- \$125 per dose
<b>Beef Cows</b>	Cow	Bull	Calf	9 months	1	1	\$800- 1,500	\$800- 1,500	Min 1:15 AI no bull needed	2-15	Rare	Varies \$100- 300	Yes	\$4- \$20 + tech fee
<b>Dairy Cows</b>	Cow	Bull	Calf	9months	1	1	\$1000- 1,500	\$1,000- 2,000	Min 1:15 AI no bull needed	2-10	Rare	Varies \$100- 300	Yes	\$4- \$20 + tech fee
<b>Work Horses</b>	Mare	Stall- ion	Foal	11 months	1	1	\$500- 3,000	\$500- 3,000	Min 1:5 AI Stallion not needed	Stallion 2-15 Mare 3- 20	Yes	\$100- 1,000 +ship & vet	Yes	\$400- 1,000 +ship & vet

## Basic Livestock Breeding for Small-Scale Farms

### Considerations for Small-Scale Livestock Breeding

#### Chickens

- Relatively easy and inexpensive to raise, keep, and manage breeding flock.
- Only standard, purebreds will breed true.
- Hens and roosters readily breed and lay fertile eggs.
- Fertile eggs can be stored at cool room temperature for up to a week in order to fill incubator.
- Broody hens readily set and hatch up to 15 eggs and raise the young themselves (plus artificially hatched chicks).
- Incubators run from \$100 (30 egg) to \$700 (200) and are relatively easy to use.
- Home-hatched chicks will be roughly 50% male.



#### Ducks

- Breeding stock hardy, but must be protected from predators; keep extra males.
- Some ducks prefer to have water for breeding and will breed more.
- Hens lay steadily during the breeding season, but eggs are commonly dirty and harder to keep until incubation.
- Broody ducks are good setters and hatchers, but tend to lose ducklings if free-range.
- Eggs artificially incubated require careful moisture monitoring.

#### Turkeys

- Breeding stock relatively expensive to raise and maintain and become large birds.
- Only standard, heritage breeds can breed naturally. Broad breasted breeds require AI.
- Toms can reach great size and be aggressive.
- Hens are good brooders and mothers, but are commonly broody too late in the season.
- Turkey eggs keep well for a week to fill the brooder.
- New poults are delicate and require higher protein than other poultry.

## Hogs

- Breeding stock expensive to purchase, raise, and maintain. Adults eat at least 1-ton feed/year.
- Keeping a boar only economical with at least six sows to breed.
- Meat from a retired 600 lb certified organic boar not sellable for human consumption.
- AI is available, but is most successful with a boar present anyway. Many rare breeds not available.
- Boar semen costs \$10-100/dose plus shipping (\$30-50) and must be ordered in advance and timed with estrus.
- Boar semen is stored at 64 degrees F and it is not difficult to learn insemination of sows.
- Live cover is reliable, but must be timed to fertilize the eggs over two days.
- You can't just get a sow pregnant, you must get her *really* pregnant.
- Careful management of piglets is essential because losses are very expensive.



## Cattle

- Breeding stock is expensive to purchase and maintain.
- Keeping a bull is only economical with at least 15 cows.
- Bulls can be very dangerous and difficult to house.
- It is possible to lease bulls or truck cows to other farms for breeding if you are comfortable with the biosecurity.
- AI is common and widely available. Many breeds are available.
- Bull semen costs \$15-20 a straw and must be stored in a liquid nitrogen tank.
- Cow AI is more difficult to learn, but most AI technicians (if you're in a dairy area) will do a few cows for about \$35 + semen.
- Single cows can be difficult to breed because sometimes they don't show their heat without other cows around.

## Horses

- Breeding stock expensive to purchase and maintain.
- Stallions can be difficult to manage and are not practical unless you plan to be a full time breeder.
- Choosing horses to breed should be done carefully; poorly bred horses are difficult to sell and are typically not eaten.
- AI and live cover are widely available from most breeds of workhorse.
- AI generally costs approximately \$400 for the semen plus several hundred dollars for the vet work on both ends.
- Using AI means the mare does not need to be shipped and gives you many options for sires around the country.

- Live cover is also available for approved mares and generally costs approximately \$100-500 plus trucking to the stallion.
- The stallion owner may also charge for stabling the mare and vet checking her to ensure pregnancy.
- Unless you have a very special horse to breed, it is usually cheaper and easier to buy foals from breeders.

## **Resources**

### **Poultry**

Raising Poultry the Modern Way, Leonard Mercia, 1975

Modern Waterfowl Management and Breeding Guide, Oscar Grow, 1972

Success with Baby Chicks, Robert Plamondon, 2003

A Guide to Better Hatching, Janet Stromberg, 1975

### **Hogs**

Swine Resource Handbook for Market and Breeding Projects, 4-H Circular 134R, 2001

Small-Scale Pig Raising, Dirk van Loon, 1978

Dirt Hog, Kelly Klober, 2007

### **Cattle**

The Family Cow, Dirk van Loon, 1976

Getting Started with Beef and Dairy Cattle, Heather Smith Thomas, 2005

Reproduction and Animal Health, Charles Walters and Gearld Fry, 2003

### **Horses**

Draft Horses an Owners Manual, Beth Valentine and Michael Wildenstein, 2000

The Draft Horse Primer, Maurice Telleen, 1977