

HOW THE CHICKEN LAYS THE EGG

From the Beginning

A newly hatched pullet comes equipped with two ovaries and all the ova (potential eggs) she will ever lay. As she matures, the right ovary will begin to atrophy so that only the left ovary remains. In this single, functioning ovary are about 4000 ova, or undeveloped yolks.

Ready to Lay

When a pullet reaches an age at which they are ready to begin laying, the ova will mature one by one. At any given time the hen's body has ova in various stages of development. Every 25 hours or so, one ovum will receive enough layers of yolk to be released into the oviduct in a process called ovulation.

Egg Creation

Each time a hen lays an egg, the ovulation cycle will begin anew approximately one hour later. The yolk that is released from the ovary will travel through the oviduct. If the hen has mated with a rooster, this is where fertilization takes place. As the egg moves through the oviduct, layers of albumin (egg white) are deposited around the yolk. A thin membrane forms around the albumin-encased yolk, and finally the calcium rich shell forms around the egg. This entire process takes about 25 hours.

The Laying process

When the hen feels the urge to lay, she will enter the nest area and settle in for up to an hour and a half. They may appear to be resting or even fall asleep. As the egg moves into the cloacae, she will become somewhat excited and raise her tail. The tail raising will increase in frequency – much like a woman during labor contractions.

When the egg-laying moment is imminent, the hen will suddenly stand up with her feet wide apart, the vent or opening to the outside, opens a little and a mucous membrane lining – the cloaca begins to appear. The hen will begin to lower her bottom and the vent will rapidly widen, stretching the rim. A pinkish dome will form, beneath this is the egg. The vent will dilate, causing the mucous membrane lining of the cloaca to bulge and out will slip the egg, widest end first.

Once the hen has successfully layed her egg, she hen will inspect her egg and then leave the nest, cackling proudly.