

# Backyard chickens are the bomb!

What better way to start a morning than sitting down to two freshly fried eggs that were just laid by industrious hens a few hours ago? Nothing tastes quite as amazing as your own eggs from hens you know have been ethically raised and fed only the best of foods!

This spring, I invested in a "chicken tractor" and two Leghorn Layers. My husband and I have delved into pigs, cows, horses, sheep, goats and even have a llama, but nothing makes me happier than my two backyard hens.

A chicken tractor is a chicken hutch on wheels that you can move around your backyard or field. In my opinion this is the best possible way to keep a small number of hens. Part of the construct is a little enclosed hen house with a floor with a place for the girls to perch and lay, and the other area is right on the ground, so chickens can scratch and peck at the ground.

Chickens love to scratch and peck; it is their part of their natural behavior and helps contribute to their health and happiness.

My chicken tractor is built like a little condo and has a "downstairs" right on the ground with chicken wire walls, and then a little ladder goes up to the "bedroom" with a perch, fresh water and shavings for the girls to nest in.

Every morning, I scoop out the poop (takes two seconds) give the hens some chicken feed and give them some fresh water. Total labor time is about five minutes.

After I come home from work, I usually have two eggs waiting for me, and I refresh their water and toss a bit more grain on the ground. Another five



## Fawns' Foibles

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minutes.

On the weekend, I move the chicken tractor to an untouched patch of grass, and let them start their pecking and scratching afresh. What is left behind is normally a completely barren patch of brown earth almost completely devoid of any edible organic matter.

Interestingly enough, I have a white Leghorn and a brown Leghorn. The white chicken always gives me a white egg and the brown chicken brown eggs. Normally this is the rule for chickens; brown eggs from brown hens, white eggs from white hens, but there are exceptions! There are even chickens called Araucanas that lay blue and green eggs.

Backyard chickens are allowed in many cities throughout North America (Vancouver, New York, Los Angeles, Brampton, Kingston... ) but Toronto does not allow any poultry in the city under a bylaw that lists chickens as a prohibited animal.

There is a large contingency of chicken aficionados who have been battling for the right to keep their own backyard hens, but in December Toronto's licensing and standards committee voted to "defer indefinitely" a request to study the possibility of allowing chickens in Toronto.

This basically means that the city is not actively hunting out those keeping chickens illegally in their



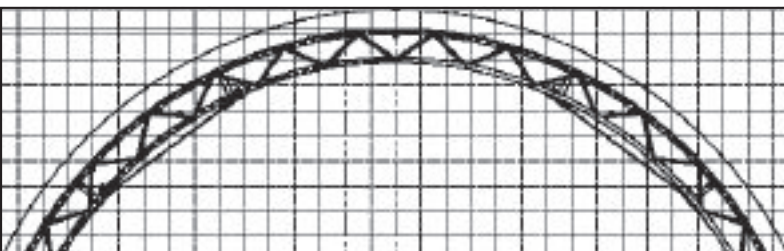
Faith Fawns shows off her chicken tractor with her favourite Brown Leghorn hen. Leghorns are a breed of chicken originating in Tuscany Italy and are used mainly for egg production. The chicken tractor is moved around the pasture weekly, giving the chickens fresh grass and a clean environment.

Photo/ANGELIQUE FAWNS

backyards but they will investigate complaints.

As the local food movement is growing and becomes more popular, it seems to make sense to legalize the keeping of one or two hens for city dwellers. How much more noise and mess will a chicken make as opposed to a dog?!

Living on a farm, I luckily have the right to keep chickens. However, I don't want a full scale chicken operation. I am pretty thrilled to have fresh eggs for my family at the cost of a bag of chicken grain (that lasts forever) and 10 minutes a day labor.



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