



Review: The Chicken Swing

By Kate Taylor

The intelligence of a chicken is not lost on the attentive enthusiast and small-flock owner. Though underrated, chickens are smart. They have individual personalities and are curious, and are subsequently susceptible to boredom when confined. This lack of stimulation and boredom in the coop can lead to overeating and some nasty behavior towards one another.

While my 19 girls reside in a rather large 8- by 27-foot Quonset hut style-coop with access to a large fenced-in yard, I am always seeking ways to enhance confined life, especially during the long winter months. The Chicken Swing by Fowl Play Products LLC caught my attention with its quirky, novel idea: A swing-set for chickens. And why not? Parakeets, finches, and other caged birds use swings, leaving no reason why chickens might not enjoy one as well.



Out of the box

The Chicken Swing consists of a very simple design made from basic materials. The base of the swing is styled after an ear of corn, which lends an easier-to-grip surface than smooth plastic. The first length of attachment to the yellow base is a pair of light-weight jointed green metal bars, followed by lengths of rope, a stabilizing cross bar three-fourths of the way up, and simple plastic loops to secure the rope wherever you'd like to hang the swing. There is no assembly required except to loop the ends of the ropes around the bar or beam where the swing will hang, then thread the ends of the rope through the small plastic securing pieces and tie it tight.

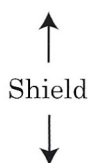
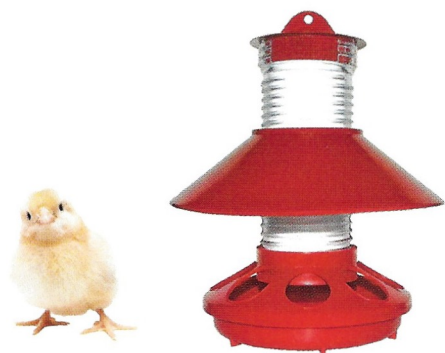
Now for the tricky part: Convincing the chickens to try out the swing. This isn't something that will likely happen overnight, at least not for adult birds. Included in The Chicken Swing packaging was a complimentary DVD featuring a small group of chicks enjoying their swing. Young birds take much less time to master this new toy since they are quickly overcome by curiosity. For this



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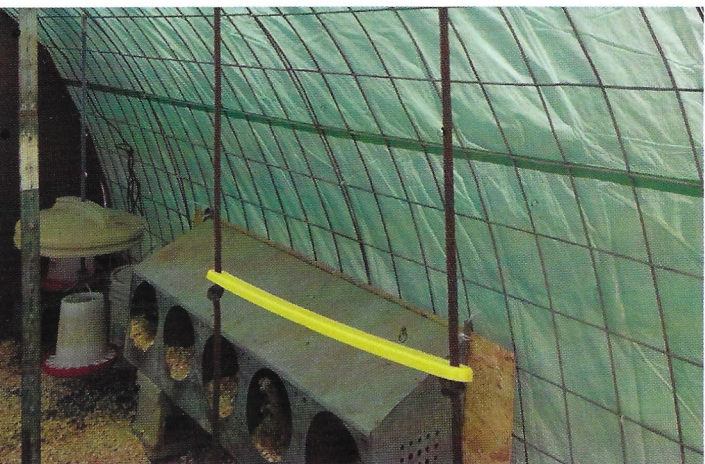
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reason, it is recommended that your birds be introduced to the swing as young chicks—rather than as adults—whenever possible. This will make for an easier and more natural acclimation to this fun, new coop entertainment.

One recommendation made by the company for gently encouraging adult birds to use the swing is to select your tamest bird and gently place her on the swing, rewarding her calmly with meal worms. Care must be taken not to frighten her or she may associate the swing with a bad experience. Once one or two chickens in your flock have taken to the swing, the rest are much more likely to follow suit on their own.

Hanging out

As for swing placement, it is recommended the swing be hung 18 to 42 inches off the ground. At first, this seemed to me it'd be much too high off the ground. However, after hanging The Chicken Swing only a foot off the ground, I quickly realized that the problem with this lies in the hefty kick-back of the swing when a chicken hops off. As they hop off, the swing flings back and forth rapidly, and if it's not high enough to clear the heads of any surrounding chickens on the floor, someone is likely to get thwacked.



A video is available on fowlplayproducts.com which shows adult hens actively using a Chicken Swing, which seems to be hanging quite high off the ground. Still, the hens are able to hop up onto it with no problem. I did leave the swing in my coop rather low to the ground for a few weeks so they could easily investigate it—without needing to make the commitment to actually *hop* on it. After they grew accustomed to it, I raised it to the recommended minimum height of approximately 18 inches off the ground.

In use

Our Upper Peninsula Michigan snow was beginning to melt and the chicken run had already begun to entice my flock at the time of The Chicken Swing's installation. I do believe this led to less interest in using the swing than mid-winter coop confinement might have inspired. Luckily, included along with the swing were a few pages of "Tips and Information" and "Questions and Answers" to get your fowl using their swing. The sheet on installation is simple and easy to follow. There are even instructions on modifying the swing's installation methods to accommodate small backyard coops and brooders that are less than 48 inches high.

Enclosed along with the swing and information packet was a letter from Jennifer Connell, owner of Fowl Play Products LLC, in which she shared exciting news for purchasers of The Chicken Swing. Beginning May 2015, the retail price of the swing has been reduced from \$49.95 to \$29.99, along with a change in packaging and manufacturer, all in an effort to bring more swings to more chickens.

The takeaway

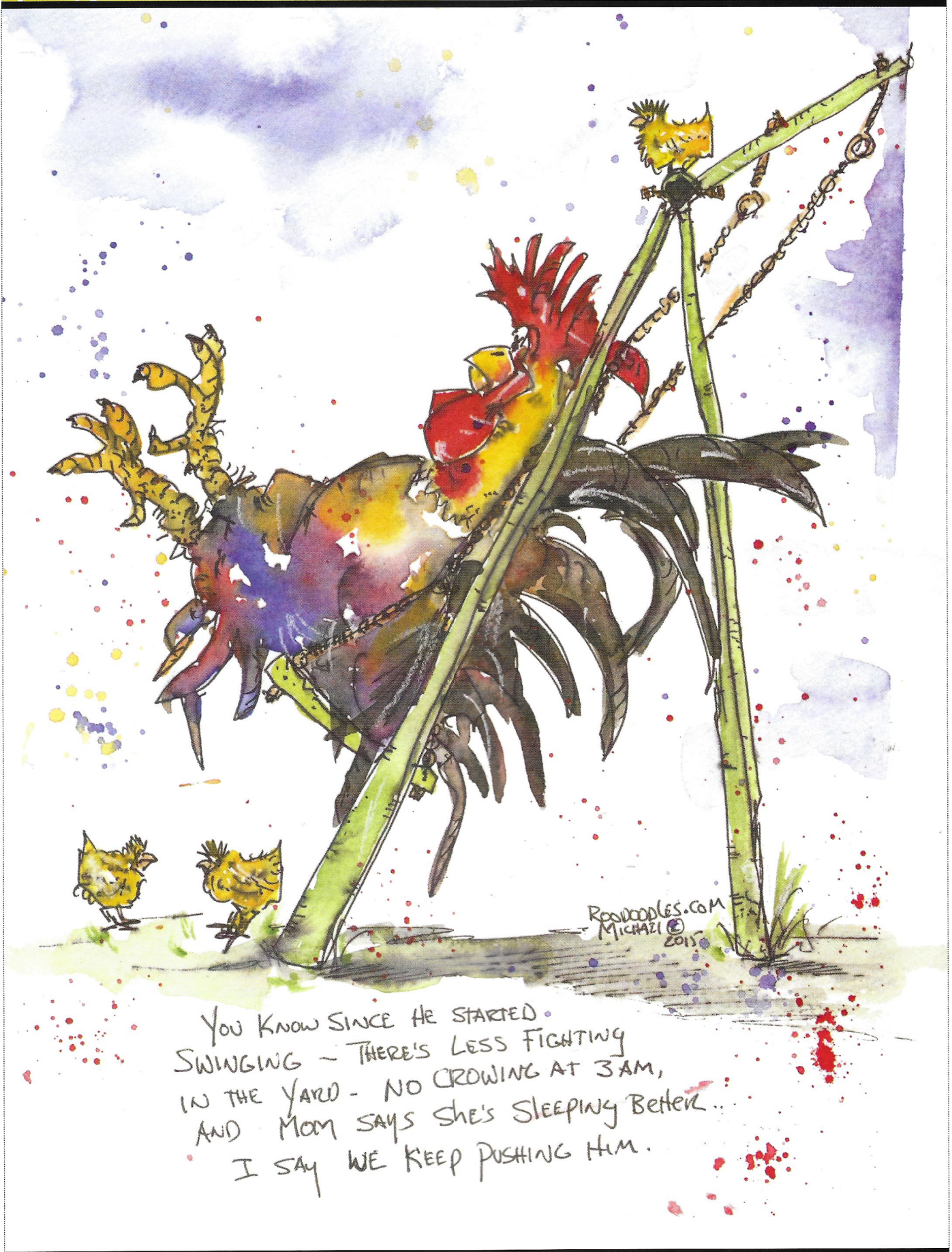
It may take some time for your adult flock to become accustomed to their new swing, but with patience and a little effort, your confined flock will come to enjoy The Chicken Swing. And if you start them off young, it will take no time at all. Remember, if your birds free range and are not bored, they will likely not be interested in swinging. However, for the coop-confined flock, this product is a great way to encourage their minds and bodies to stay active, happy, and healthy. 🐔

For more information:

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About the author

Kate Taylor and her nine year old daughter maintain an improvised urban farm venture dubbed the Eclectic Carton Farm & Garden, home to nineteen hens, three new chicks, and a Spanish Mustang. Kate also edits the newsletter and is publicity chair for the Spanish Mustang Registry, Inc.



YOU KNOW SINCE HE STARTED
SWINGING - THERE'S LESS FIGHTING
IN THE YARD - NO CROWING AT 3AM,
AND MOM SAYS SHE'S SLEEPING BETTER...
I SAY WE KEEP PUSHING HIM.