

# Meet marvellous Marvin

Say hello to Marvin, my little buddy and the very first chick I hatched.

Marvin came into our lives in the first week of spring. The day after he was born, we had a foot of snow on our doorstep. His mum, Tui, decided to go broody early and I knew her eggs wouldn't survive the freezing spring. So I decided to take the remaining few, create a DIY incubator (using a cake tin lined with hay and a lamp) and hatch them myself. Marvin was the only chick who survived.

He has been a wonderful buddy right from the start. From just a few days old, he would run to me whenever I tapped my fingers, thinking I was trying to teach him something. For the first eight weeks of his life, he slept in a cardboard box by the fireplace with a hot-water bottle. (Believe it or not, I got up to refill it once or twice a night for the first two weeks; it was a bit like having a newborn again.)

He has become my gardening friend and hangs around my two boys all the time, checking out what they're up to in the sandpit.

A month ago, I decided Marvin was old enough to sleep outside. So I got him a chicken coop and painted it the same colour as our 150-year-old farmhouse in the hills close to Arrowtown. We now have matching homes. Marvin loves his new coop — he sleeps in the same corner each night and walks out his door and down his plank every morning, eager for breakfast.

Marvin is such a clever chick he has even written a children's book about his adventures called *Marvellous Marvin!* It's available in all good bookstores, and all of 'his' author profits go directly to charities HUHA (Helping You Help Animals) and Garden to Table.

## 8 THINGS EVERY COOP NEEDS

**SPACE** The minimum welfare standard is one square metre of coop per 10 birds. But most prefer closer to three birds per square metre.

**MOBILITY** A mobile hen house offers more options, even if kept in one spot. Look for one that is easy to lift or carry or on wheels or skids.

**GOOD VENTILATION** A dry coop is essential for good health; diseases and pests mostly prefer the wet. A hen enclosure needs proper ventilation since chickens expel a lot of moisture when they breathe out.

**EASY TO CLEAN** Plastic or painted wood is much easier to clean and treat for pests than raw timber. Light colours, or greyed colours made with Resene CoolColour paint, ensure a coop doesn't get too hot.

**PERCHES** These need to be rounded, five centimetres in diameter, secure and easily removable for cleaning with at least 17 centimetres of perch per bird.

**NEST BOXES** A suitable nest box is dark, at least 30 centimetres wide and 35 centimetres high, has a lip at the front (so a bird can snuggle behind it) and a 20-centimetre-deep bed of wood chips, hay or straw.

**SECURITY** A secure and lockable door keeps birds safe from predators overnight.

**FEEDERS AND WATERERS** An auto-feeder prevents pest birds and rodents from stealing substantial amounts of feed. Look for waterers that are sturdy, self-filling, and easy to clean.



I painted Marvin's coop to match our home using heritage-inspired colours of Resene Thorndon Cream on the walls, Resene Pioneer Red on the roof and Resene Arrowtown on the trims.

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