

Sayings About Farm Life (Part 1)

(Story words: language, hatch)

Today, it is a rare thing to live on a farm in the United States. Only about 1% of people in the U.S. live on farms. But over two hundred years ago, in 1800, it was common to live on farms. In fact, 90% of people in the U.S. lived on a farm then. Our language has many sayings that have to do with life on the farm because in the past details of farm life were vivid to most people.

Chickens do not seem wise or thoughtful at the best of times, but when something disturbs them, they scatter and run around the chicken yard in a disorganized and comical way. When people say, “He was running around like a chicken,” they are describing someone who is rushing and panicking with no time to think or plan.

Farmers use baskets to collect eggs. If a farmer were to trip, all the eggs he gathered would be broken. When people say, “Do not put all your eggs in one basket,” they

are saying it is good to divide your assets so that no matter what happens you will have some of them left. Farmers did not collect eggs in several baskets, but many of them did invest in several kinds of livestock or crops for the family to eat or sell, and thus did not depend on just one thing doing well.

Hens sit on eggs before those eggs hatch into chicks. Smart farmers knew that only some of the eggs would survive and grow into chickens to be sold. The saying, “Do not count your chickens before they are hatched,” expresses the idea that a wise person takes into account that many promising plans do not turn out the way we hope. If we are counting on everything going according to our hopes and dreams, we will be let down.