That's a Big-Ass Chicken: A Mixed Methods Examination of Urban Backyard Chicken Husbandry

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Abstract

This study investigates the growing phenomenon of backyard chicken keeping in urban and suburban environments, a practice that has gained significant momentum amid rising commercial egg prices. Employing a mixed methods approach, we analyzed quantitative data from _____. Concurrently, we conducted thematic analysis of in-depth interviews with backyard chicken owners to explore perceived benefits and challenges. Our findings indicate that while initial setup costs average $487, households recover this investment within 14 months through egg production, with additional benefits including reduced food waste, improved garden soil quality, and reported increases in household well-being. Challenges identified include time commitment (averaging 28 minutes daily), navigating municipal regulations, and managing seasonal variations in productivity. Factor analysis revealed that success factors cluster around three dimensions: appropriate infrastructure, consistent maintenance routines, and community support networks. Ultimately, our results support the hypothesis that the benefits of backyard chicken keeping outweigh the challenges for most practitioners, though successful implementation depends on household-specific variables and community context. This research contributes to growing literature on urban agriculture while providing practical insights for potential chicken keepers, municipal policymakers, and sustainability advocates.

This study illustrates not only how, but also why one should raise big-ass backyard chickens. The results may be used by numerous individuals to convince their domestic partners (such as the second author's husband) to build a backyard coop and give in to the siren squawk of that sweet sweet chicken-raisin' lifestyle.

Keywords: chickens, backyard, eggs, pros and cons, bigger is better

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If you've ever seen a picture of Pechugas the Rooster (Fig. 1), your first words would invariably be "That's a Big-Ass Chicken!" And you would be correct.

In recent decades, the practice of maintaining domestic poultry within urban and suburban residential settings has experienced a notable resurgence (Mace & Knight, 2024). This phenomenon, colloquially referred to as "backyard chicken keeping," represents a fascinating intersection of agricultural tradition and contemporary sustainability movements. The economic landscape has further accelerated this trend, as inflated egg prices have prompted an increasing number of households to consider domestic poultry as a pragmatic response to marketplace volatility (Italie, 2025). Indeed, consumer data suggests that the correlation between rising commercial egg costs and the purchase of chicken coops is remarkably robust(Kagaya et al., 2025).

[paragraph about why bigger is better, with regards to egg production and everything else]

Previous studies have largely focused either on large-scale commercial poultry operations or on historical agricultural practices (Bist et al., 2024; Gržinić et al., 2023; Jeni et al., 2021). While proponents extol the virtues of fresh eggs and animated garden assistants, detractors cite concerns ranging from zoonotic disease transmission to neighborhood noise pollution—a concern that anyone who has experienced a rooster's enthusiasm for announcing dawn can readily appreciate. Surprisingly, of those studies that do consider the costs and benefits of backyard chicken keeping, none that to the authors knowledge look into the phenomenon of the Big-Ass Chicken (BAC)(Ayala et al., 2020; Fischer & Milburn, 2019; Schindler, n.d.; Singh et al., 2022). This study aims to fill that obvious (and sizeable) gap.

Current Study

Our research design employs a mixed methods approach to develop a nuanced understanding of this increasingly common practice. The methodology combines quantitative data analysis examining multiple factors related to Big-Ass backyard chicken

Figure 1

Pechugas the Rooster

Note. This is a Big-Ass Chicken.

husbandry—including analysis of factors related to chicken size and egg production—with qualitative thematic analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with chicken owners of BAC's. By triangulating these methodological approaches, we aspire to move beyond anecdotal evidence and develop an empirically robust understanding of what might be termed the "net hennefit" of backyard chicken husbandry in contemporary urban contexts. The present study thus investigates two hypotheses: 1. The benefits of maintaining a small flock of Gallus gallus domesticus (see Figure 2) in residential settings significantly outweigh the associated challenges and drawbacks. 2. Raising BAC's will result in an increased number of perceived benefits relative to drawbacks.

Method

Participants

Chickens

We looked at 50 Gallus gallus domesticus chicks, starting from hatching…

Humans

We looked at interview of ___ individuals from ___

Procedure

Quantitative

We measured the weight of chickens ….

Qualitative

We conducted thematic analysis of transcripts from recorded in depth interviews with owners of backyard chickens, including BAC's.

Measures

Quantitative

Qualitative

thematic analysis

Figure 2

Gallus gallus domesticus

Note. Also known as the Orpington chicken.

Results

Figure 1: Plot of Chicken Growth

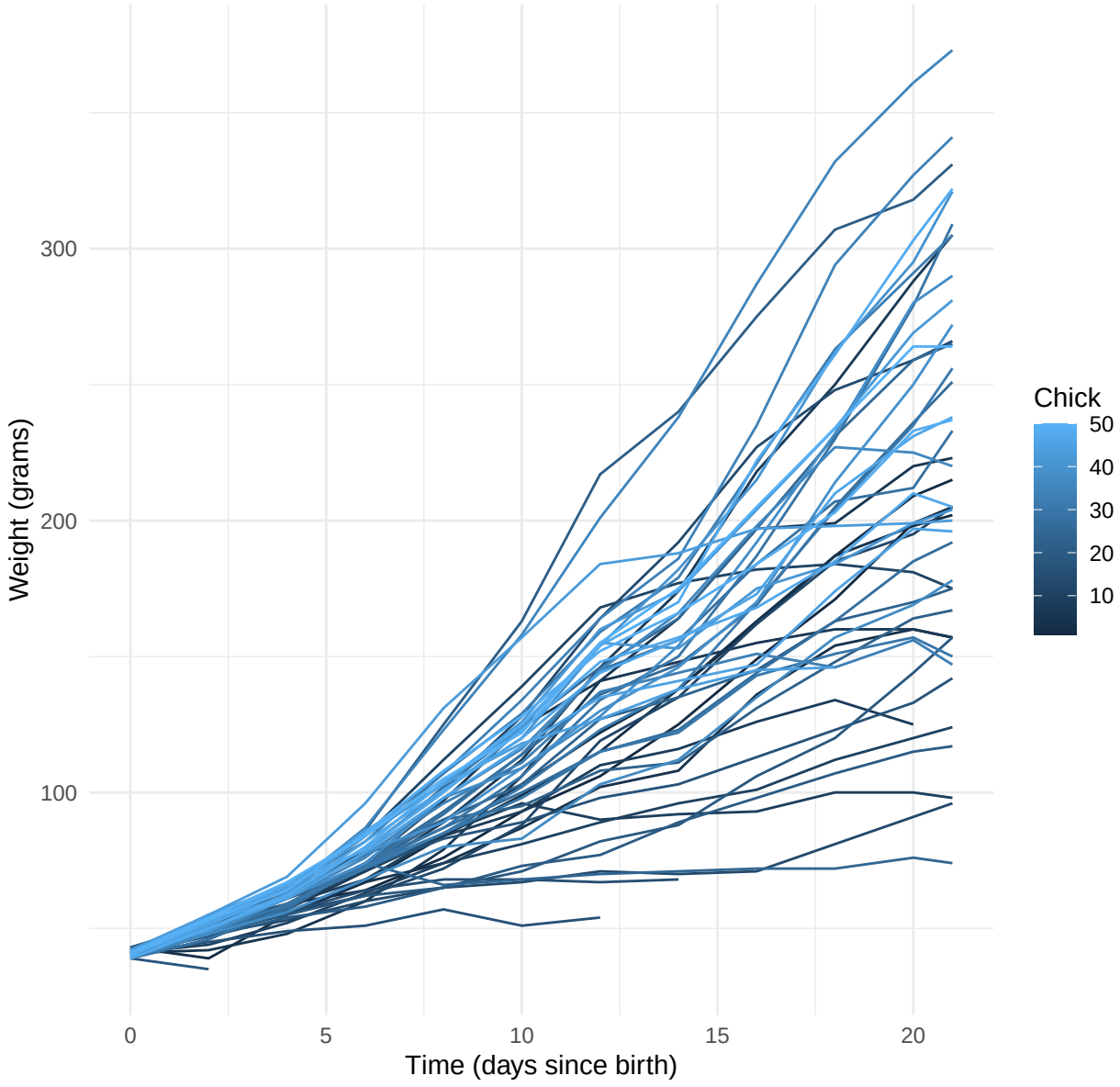
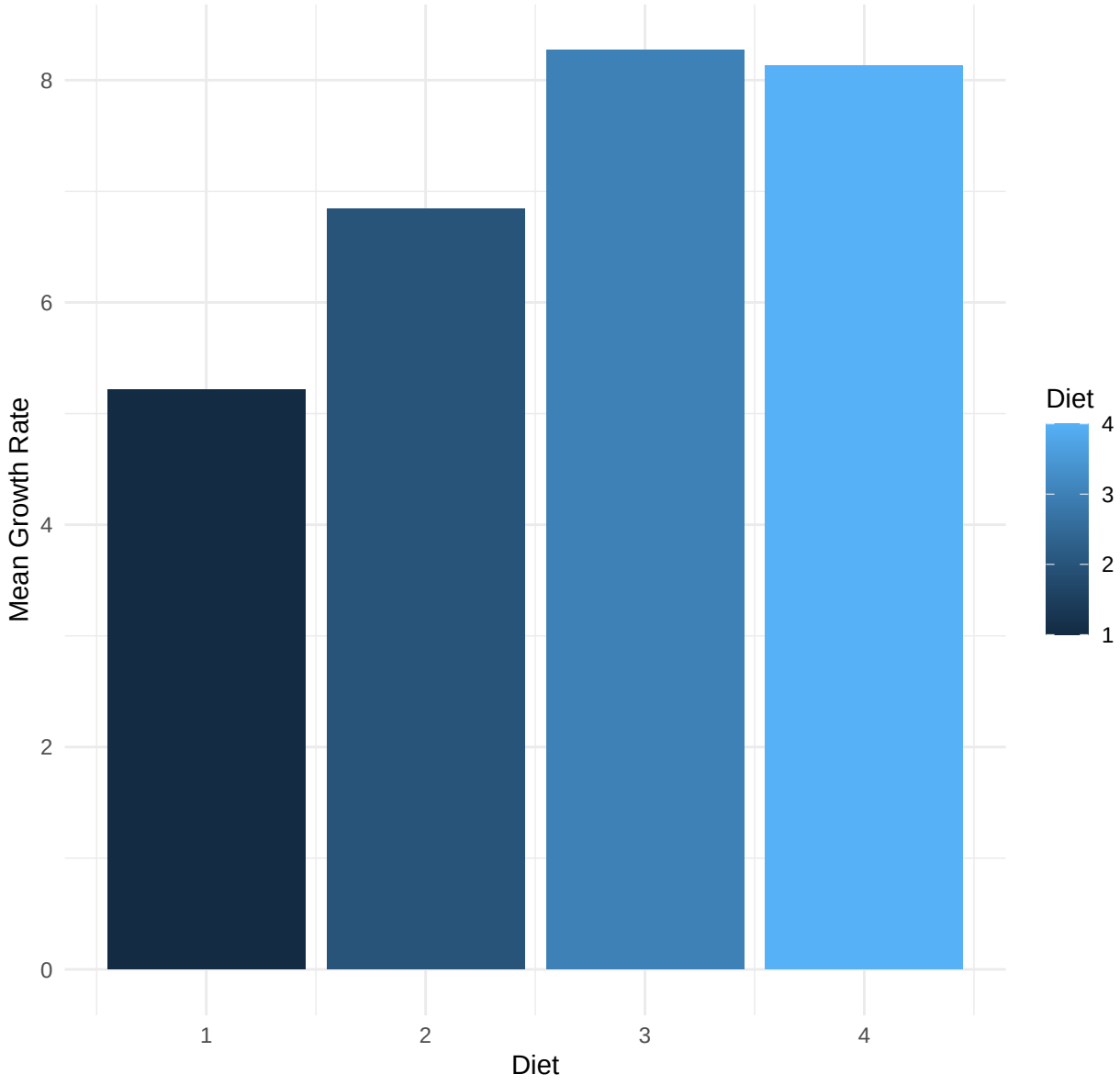


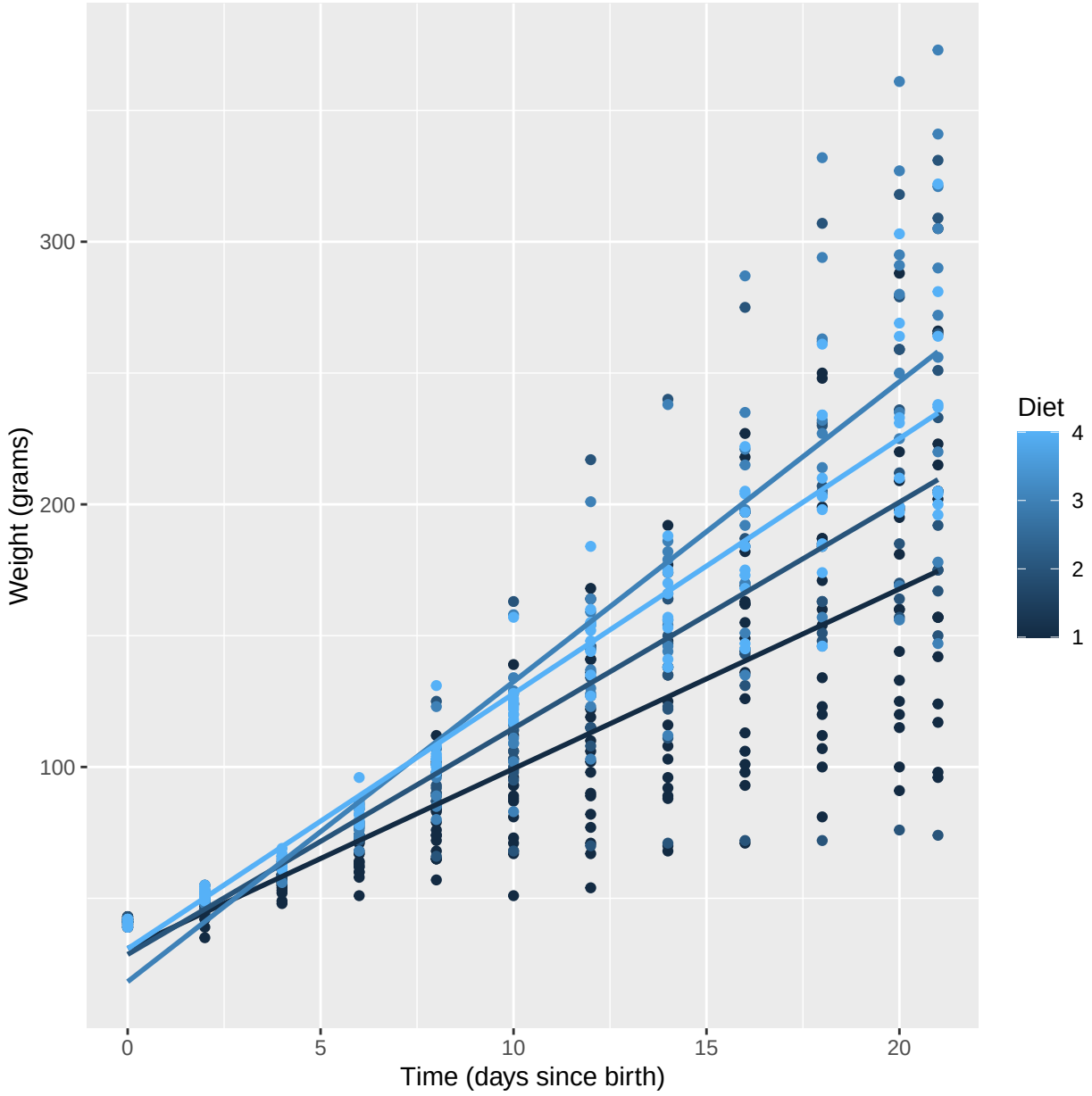
Figure 2: Mean Growth Rate Bar Plot (rate per day)



`geom_smooth()` using formula = 'y ~ x'

Figure 3

Regression of Weight on Time by Diet



Discussion

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