Growing & Homesteading: What It Takes and What You Get

Turquoise Estates, Dolan Springs, Mohave County AZ - website section 05. Version 3, 2026-10-20. Homesteading is about clean food, food on hand and readiness, not beating grocery prices. Labels: (D) Documented = official data or extension publication; (C) Claimed = a company, blog or survey says so; (E) Estimate = our math from stated inputs.

1. Why homestead

- Food when the shelves are empty. In spring 2020, COVID-19 shifted demand from restaurants to grocery stores and closed meatpacking plants, causing temporary empty shelves and tighter meat supplies; wholesale eggs more than tripled to $3.07/doz (D, USDA blog "Another Look at Availability and Prices of Food Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic"; USDA ERS Charts of Note). From 2022 to 2025, highly pathogenic avian influenza killed large numbers of laying hens; retail eggs hit a record $6.23/doz in March 2025 (D, Congressional Research Service IF12949; USDA ERS). A backyard flock kept away from wild birds kept laying through that.
- Know what is in your food. You choose the seed, the feed, the spray (or none) and the processing: no added preservatives, colorings or packaging. That is a choice you control, not a health claim (E).
- Fresher means more nutrients. Spinach lost 75% of its vitamin C after 21 days in the refrigerator and 100% in under 4 days at room temperature; frozen spinach lost about 30% over 12 months (D, Rickman, Barrett & Bruhn 2007, J. Sci. Food Agric., doi:10.1002/jsfa.2825). Picking minutes before a meal skips the days in transit and on the shelf.
- Preserved food reserves and readiness. Canning, freezing, drying and a freezer of home-raised beef give months of supply on hand. Canned vegetables keep their vitamin C well once processed (D, same study). Off-grid freezers need solar capacity - see the solar package (E).
- Skills and resilience. Growing, animal care, butchering and preserving are skills that hold up whatever the economy does; extension services (UA Mohave County, 4-H) teach them (E).
- Lifestyle. Learn where your food comes from; daily chores build routine; meals come from your own land (E).

2. What it takes and what you get

Level / household	Setup	Startup	Yearly cost self-haul / delivered water	Produced per year	Share of household needs
Light, 2 people	100 sq ft garden, 4 hens, 0 meat birds	$950	$281 / $407	50 lb produce, 72 doz eggs, 0 lb chicken	Surplus eggs; some produce
Light, 4 people	150 sq ft garden, 6 hens, 0 meat birds	$1,162	$361 / $550	75 lb produce, 108 doz eggs, 0 lb chicken	Surplus eggs; some produce
Moderate, 2 people	300 sq ft garden, 8 hens, 15 meat birds	$2,004	$750 / $1,126	150 lb produce, 144 doz eggs, 94 lb chicken	Surplus eggs; some produce and chicken
Moderate, 4 people	600 sq ft garden, 10 hens, 25 meat birds	$2,526	$1,031 / $1,773	300 lb produce, 180 doz eggs, 158 lb chicken	Surplus eggs; some produce and chicken
Extreme, 2 people	1,000 sq ft garden,	$3,518	$1,295 / $2,518	500 lb produce, 216	Surplus eggs; much

	12 hens, 30 meat birds			doz eggs, 189 lb chicken	of produce and chicken
Extreme, 4 people	2,000 sq ft garden, 16 hens, 50 meat birds	$5,242	$2,038 / $4,467	1000 lb produce, 288 doz eggs, 315 lb chicken	Surplus eggs; much of produce and chicken
Beef steer, household	1 feeder steer 600 -> 1,200 lb, ~300 days	~$1,500 pen/trough (E) + $2,190 calf	$4,598 / $4,812 all-in	481 lb packaged beef	~2 yrs of beef for 4, ~4 yrs for 2

Needs assumed per person per year (C/E): ~280 eggs, ~100 lb chicken and ~59 lb beef (approximate USDA ERS per-capita availability figures, check current tables), 365 lb fresh produce (E: about 1 lb/day). These needs figures are approximate and unverified, so shares are given in plain words. Surplus eggs to share, trade or sell (on-site sales allowed on A-R if you live there, D). All table figures are estimates (E) from the inputs in section 5. Labor not counted.

What it takes and what you get: growing your own food at Turquoise Estates

Level	Setup	Startup cost	Yearly cost self-haul - delivered water	What you get per year	Share of household needs
Light 2 people	100 sq ft garden 4 hens	$950	$281 - $407	50 lb produce 72 doz eggs	Surplus eggs; some produce
Light 4 people	150 sq ft garden 6 hens	$1,162	$361 - $550	75 lb produce 108 doz eggs	Surplus eggs; some produce
Moderate 2 people	300 sq ft garden 8 hens, 15 meat birds	$2,004	$750 - $1,126	150 lb produce 144 doz eggs 94 lb chicken	Surplus eggs; some produce and chicken
Moderate 4 people	600 sq ft garden 10 hens, 25 meat birds	$2,526	$1,031 - $1,773	300 lb produce 180 doz eggs 158 lb chicken	Surplus eggs; some produce and chicken
Extreme 2 people	1,000 sq ft garden 12 hens, 30 meat birds	$3,518	$1,295 - $2,518	500 lb produce 216 doz eggs 189 lb chicken	Surplus eggs; much of produce and chicken
Extreme 4 people	2,000 sq ft garden 16 hens, 50 meat birds	$5,242	$2,038 - $4,467	1,000 lb produce 288 doz eggs 315 lb chicken	Surplus eggs; much of produce and chicken
Beef steer household	1 steer, 600 lb feeder raised ~10 mo to 1,200 lb	~$1,500 pen/trough + $2,190 calf	$4,598 - $4,812 (incl. calf + butcher)	481 lb packaged beef (744 lb hanging)	~2 yrs of beef for 4 ~4 yrs for 2 $9.56/lb vs store $9.47

Clean food you raised yourself, on hand when stores run short. Homestead food usually costs more than the store; with record beef prices, a home-raised steer now lands close to retail.

Shares of household needs are rough estimates based on approximate per-person consumption.
Store beef: USDA ERS all-fresh $9.47/lb, Sep 2026. Estimates from extension yields and 2026 AZ prices; labor not counted. Water: self-hauled $6.36 vs. delivered ~$54 per 1,000 gal.

3. Beef steer: raising and butchering one for the household

Item	Amount	Label / source
Feeder steer, 600-699 lb	$365/cwt x 600 lb = $2,190	D - Marana Stockyards (AZ) sale Oct 14, 2026 (617-lb avg). Douglas AZ import steers $349-359/cwt Oct 20 (D, USDA AMS)
Feed to ~1,200 lb	~3.4 tons alfalfa over ~300 days = $918-1,054	D - AZ alfalfa $240-310/ton, USDA AMS AZ Direct Hay Report wk ending Oct 16, 2026; E - tons/days from ~2.5% body weight intake (Montana State, NMSU). Freight to Dolan Springs extra. Grain finishing (common, ~90 days) adds cost but speeds gain
Water	~15 gal/day x 300 = 4,500 gal: $29 self-haul / $243 delivered	E - intake assumption
Vet, minerals, misc	$100	E
Kill fee + cut & wrap	$145 + $1.25/lb x 744 lb hanging = $1,075	D - Tonopah Processing 2026 price list (custom exempt). Others: Clayton's mobile $200 + $1.45/lb; AZ Mobile Meat $250 + $1.75/lb mobile or $130 + $1.30/lb haul-in
Hauling to processor	$150 minimum	D - Tonopah
AZ Dept of Agriculture inspection before slaughter	Required; schedule 2 weeks ahead; fee not listed	D - Tonopah (fee: confirm with AZDA)
Hanging / packaged weight	744 lb hanging (62%), ~481 lb packaged (40%	D - U. Wisconsin Extension; Mississippi State:

	of live)	~40% of live weight
Total cash cost	$4,598 (self-haul) to $4,812 (delivered water); $4,462 with $270/ton hay	E
Cost per packaged lb	$9.56 - $10.00 (low hay $9.28)	E - excludes pen/startup and labor
Store beef, Sep 2026	All-fresh $9.47/lb; ground beef $6.79/lb (+7.4% YoY); all steaks $12.69/lb (+3.5% YoY); sirloin $14.11	D - USDA ERS all-fresh; BLS average prices (via Beef Price Index)
Trend	All-fresh beef hit $9.65/lb in June 2026, +12% YoY; ground beef record $7.14 in June; steaks record $13.02 in April. Prices eased Jul-Sep 2026 but stay near records	D - USDA ERS via Meatingplace (Jul 16 and Oct 15, 2026)

Bottom line (E): a home-raised steer costs about $9.56-10.00 per packaged pound, right at the $9.47 all-fresh store average. It costs more than store ground beef but well under store steaks, and you get every cut - steaks, roasts and ground - from an animal you raised. Local ranch experience agrees (C, Turquoise Estates developer): home beef used to cost well above the store, and record beef prices have closed the gap. The feeder calf is now about half the cost because calf prices are high too.

4. Honest costs (secondary)

- Most home-produced food costs more than the store. Extension budgets put feed alone at $6.11/doz eggs (D, UF/IFAS 2023) and backyard broilers at $3.54/lb (D, U. Maryland 2026), vs. $2.27/doz and $2.06/lb in stores (D, BLS Sep 2026).
- Grocery reference (D, USDA Aug 2026, Moderate-Cost plan): $808/month for 2 adults, $1,388/month for a household of 4.
- Water is the big desert cost: delivered water roughly doubles the yearly cost of a large garden. Self-haul and drip irrigation keep it reasonable.
- The v1 report (Homestead_Cost_Comparison_2026-10-20) has the full net-savings math for anyone who wants it.

5. Inputs (garden and poultry)

- Garden yield 0.5 lb/sq ft/season (D, National Gardening Association 2009). Desert water ~1 in/week (D, UA Extension) -> 25 gal/sq ft/yr (E).
- Hens: 18 doz/yr each (D, UF/IFAS AN239); ~90 lb feed/yr (D, Oklahoma State) at $19.99/50 lb (C, Tractor Supply). Coops $369.99-679.99 (C, Tractor Supply).
- Meat birds: ~6.3 lb carcass per bird started, $6 chicks, $5/bird processing, $670 startup (D, U. Maryland FS-2025-0794).
- Hauled water $6.36/1,000 gal self-haul (2014 rate) or $90-180 per 2,500 gal delivered (C, Turquoise water package).
- Raised beds $4/sq ft, in-ground with drip $1.50/sq ft, shade cloth, $300 canning gear, $1,500 steer pen/trough (E placeholders).

6. Growing in Dolan Springs and the rules

- UA Extension 3,000-4,500 ft calendar: spring and fall gardens, 30-40% shade cloth, mulch, early-morning drip (D/C). Kingman frost ~Apr 2 / Nov 11 (C).

- Mohave A-R (Sec. 15.C): agricultural uses, gardens, greenhouses, domestic poultry, horses and cows for private use are permitted with no head-count limit; the 6-chicken / no-rooster rule is for residential zones (D). Check against the Aug 2026 ordinance.
- Turquoise CC&Rs 3.8: no feedlots, kennels or intensive operations; "small-scale ranching or hobby farming" permitted; odor/noise/waste can be stopped by the Declarant. 3.14 noise; neat temporary animal fencing OK; no fences in the rear 8-ft easement (4.2.1); water lines need Declarant approval (4.2) (D).
- Custom-exempt beef is for your own household only; it cannot be sold (C, processor terms; AZDA rules).

7. Sources

- USDA blog, COVID-19 food availability: usda.gov/about-usda/news/blog/another-look-availability-and-prices-food-amid-covid-19-pandemic ; usda.gov/about-usda/news/blog/will-covid-19-threaten-availability-and-affordability-our-food
- USDA ERS egg prices: ers.usda.gov/data-products/charts-of-note/112677 ; ers.usda.gov/data-products/charts-of-note/chart-detail?chartId=98520 ; CRS IF12949: congress.gov/crs-product/IF12949
- Rickman, Barrett & Bruhn 2007: doi.org/10.1002/jsfa.2825 (PDF: ucanr.edu/sites/default/files/2010-06/19187.pdf)
- Marana Stockyards market report Oct 14, 2026: maranastockyards.us/marketreport/current.html ; USDA AMS Mexico-US feeder import summary: ams.usda.gov/mnreports/ams_3486.pdf
- USDA AMS Arizona Direct Hay Report: ams.usda.gov/mnreports/ams_3784.pdf
- Tonopah Processing: tonopahprocessing.com ; Clayton's Processing 2026 PDF; Arizona Mobile Meat: arizonamobilemeat.com/beef
- U. Wisconsin Extension direct marketing beef: livestock.extension.wisc.edu/articles/direct-marketing-meat-beef/ ; Mississippi State: extension.msstate.edu/publications/how-much-meat-expect-beef-animal-farm-direct-beef ; Montana State step-up rations; NMSU B136
- Beef retail prices: beefpriceindex.com/beef-prices-september-2026/ ; beefpriceindex.com/wholesale-vs-retail/ ; meatingplace.com/daily-livestock-report-for-july-16-2026/ ; ERS meat price spreads: ers.usda.gov/data-products/meat-price-spreads
- USDA FNA food plans Aug 2026; BLS average prices Sep 2026; NGA 2009; UF/IFAS; Oklahoma State; U. Maryland; UA Extension; Mohave County Zoning Ordinance; Turquoise CC&Rs (see v1 report for full links).

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