

Home Rearing

Please copy this section and send home with chickens.

Parents Please Note:

- **Some Councils do not allow chickens, or have minimum requirements for housing them.**
- **These chickens have not been sexed and some may be cockerels. Many Councils do not allow them. Do you have a responsible means of placing any unwanted cockerels?**
- **Will your neighbours object to chickens in your yard?**
- **Do you have someone to look after them if you go away?**

Not only is it nice to have fresh home-grown eggs, but hens can make excellent pets and are a pleasure to have in your garden. They can clean up colonies of insects and provide fertilizer for your garden. Chickens are an important part of any Permaculture garden.

By the time the chicks leave Living Eggs' Brooder box to go to new homes, they are approximately 10 days old. They are significantly larger and more robust than when they were hatched and are starting to develop feathers on their wings and tails.

The chickens will need warmth for a further 2-6 weeks (depending on climate).



A box with a light is satisfactory, providing drafts are excluded. *Ensure that the setup is not a fire hazard.* The size of the box depends on the number of chicks.



For more chickens a larger brooder is necessary. A circular sheet of cardboard or tin plate makes an ideal brooder.
A larger rated light bulb will be required.

*There will be a **temperature** variation in the brooder depending on distance from the light and the chickens will find the most comfortable area.*

The chicks are probably the best indicators of correct temperature.

If they are huddled under the light and not moving out, then they are too cold.

If they are at the end of the brooder trying to get away from the light, then they are too hot.

If they are moving freely about the box, then they are comfortable.

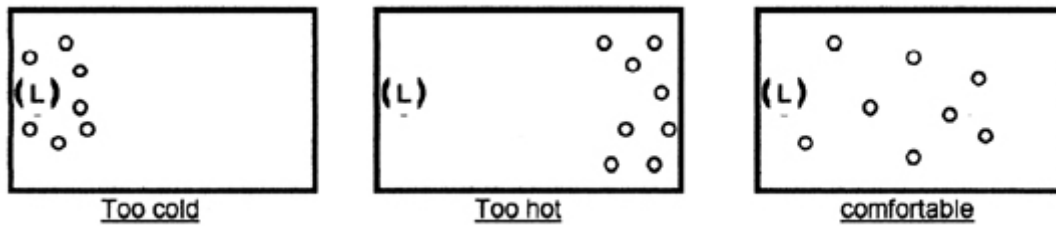
Remember though that they are babies and tend to huddle together for company or to sleep from time to time.

Typically a 60 watt bulb is sufficient.

If cold (or cold spell), increase bulb wattage.

If hot (or hot spell), decrease bulb wattage or turn off.

Use the chickens' activity levels (as shown below) to guide you on temperatures.



Newspaper on the floor is an ideal base as it can be changed easily, removing all waste and soiling. Sand, sawdust or rice hulls on the newspaper absorb much of the droppings and provide a surface to scratch in.

Heat, at a gradually reducing level will be required until they are 4-6 weeks old, depending on seasonal conditions. The reduction in heating level can be achieved by raising the light or reducing the wattage of the lamp.

At 6-8 weeks the chicks should be moved to a proper fowl run. This will have an outside run and a sheltered area for night. A perch should be available for roosting.

(For further information on care of fowls and suitable runs, refer to reference books at end of this chapter and our fact sheets)

Water

A purpose built waterer which prevents the chicks from getting wet or spilling the water is preferable. These can be purchased from Pet Shops or Produce Stores for around £1 or £2. Alternatively, a shallow bowl can be used with a flat rock in it to prevent the chicks from drowning. In this instance, the water must be changed regularly as the chicks will spoil in it.

Feed

The simplest and most practical food is the commercially prepared chick starter (chick bits). Chick starter offers a complete and balanced diet for the chicks and we strongly recommend this as their staple diet. This is available from most Pet Shops or Produce Stores in 1 or 2kg bags.

While the chick starter should be the main source of feed, chickens will appreciate a treat from time to time. Cut up greens eg. lettuce can be fed as well as left over fruit pieces. Do not feed too much as this causes loose droppings and if severe, a problem called 'pasting up' occurs where the droppings stick and harden around the vent. This must be removed as soon as noticed by moistening with warm water.

Small Garden worms are a treat and they will compete rather excitedly for them.

Husbandry

Food and droppings tend to accumulate on the toes and appear as little balls. Gently remove them by peeling away with a fingernail.

‘Pasting up’ can occur with loose droppings. Pull away to clear vent and reduce ‘wet/green’ feed.

Ill or deformed chickens should be put down as they are likely to pass disease or infection on to the remainder of the flock. The common method is neck dislocation. If uncomfortable with this procedure, you may be able to get a friend experienced with poultry to assist. A local vet is another alternative.

References

We have found the following books ideal reference sources for most poultry queries, and they are readily available from most Libraries.

"Chickens in your Backyard" by R & G Luttmann
Rodale Press

"Poultry and Poultry-Keeping" by Alice Stern
Merehurst Press

"Complete Book of Raising Livestock & Poultry"
Australia & New Zealand Book Company

"Backyard Poultry Naturally" by Alanna Moore
Bolwarrah Press