



CHICK CARE GUIDE

BROODER SET UP

A *chick's first home* will be the brooder. The size will depend on the number of chicks, but you should aim for a minimum of 2 square feet per chick. Line the brooder with a layer of clean pine shavings, changed every couple of days. When the chicks are around a month old, add a low roost approximately 4 inches off the floor of the brooder to encourage roosting. Make sure not to put the roost directly under a heat lamp. The brooder can be heated by using a 100-watt light bulb with a heat lamp.

DISEASE PREVENTION

The shavings in a brooder should never remain damp – cleanliness is VERY important at this stage of a chick's life cycle. Baby chicks are prone to a number of diseases, such as *Coccidiosis*, a parasite that thrives in damp environments; however, most chick health problems can be avoided with proper sanitation. For the first 4 weeks it is important to feed a medicated chick starter/grower. A medicated feed contains Amprolium which will help prevent parasites. Amprolium is a thiamine blocker, the food source for parasites. The dosage in medicated feed serves as a prevention method; however, if you notice bloody droppings (a symptom of *Coccidia*), a higher dose of Amprolium will be required.

TEMPERATURES

For the first week the temperature should be 90-95 degrees in the warmest part of the brooder. After the first week, reduce the temperature by 5 degree increments each week until the chicks' feathers come in (approximately 5-8 weeks).

A thermometer in the brooder is helpful, but chick behavior will be the first indicator that there is a temperature problem. If chicks are panting and/or huddling in corners farthest from the light, they are too hot. If they are huddled together under the light, they are too cold. Adjust the distance of the light until it's comfortable, and leave cooler spots in the brooder, so chicks can cool down if necessary.

FOOD & WATER

Chicks need a constant supply of fresh, clean water. The waterer should be positioned as far as possible from the heat lamp, at a height level with the chicks' back. This prevents chicks from drowning or getting soaked, and keeps droppings from getting in the drinking water. Again: *cleanliness is important*. Chicks will poop in their own food, so keep feeders clean, and refill often. Feeders can be raised up like the waterer to prevent contamination.

Chicks start out with "crumbles," or food that is specially formulated for their dietary needs. Crumbles can be medicated or non-medicated, but medicated feeds have a small amount of Amprolium to help prevent *Coccidiosis*. If you choose non-medicated feed, pay extra attention to cleanliness.

Crumbles are a complete nutrient, requiring no additional food for chicks; however, meal worms can be a fun treat. After the first week or two, chicks can be given a small amount of treats mixed with grit to help them break down the new food. If chick-size grit is not available, coarse sand works just as well.

PLAY TIME

Chicks are insatiably curious. After the first week or two, they can be put outside for short periods of time if the temperature is warm; however, **they must be watched at all times**. Chicks can move fast, squeezing into small spaces, and are helpless against a variety of predators, including the family dog or cat. If they have bonded to you, they will follow you around (the first large thing a baby chick sees is its caretaker, also known as "imprinting"). Chickens become fond of their owners, and some will even come when you call them!

KEEPING CHICKS HEALTHY

Chicks are prone to a condition called "pasty butt" when dropping's stick to and clog up their vents, making it impossible to relieve themselves. If left untreated, this condition can kill them. Check your chicks' bottoms every few hours – especially during the first 2 weeks. If you find a pasty bottom, carefully soak and remove the plug, pat the area dry, and apply a small amount of petroleum jelly or vegetable oil to the area. Organic, apple cider vinegar in drink water has been found to help prevent pasty butt. A ratio of 3-4 tablespoons per gallon water is recommended.



KEEP YOUR CHICKS AT THE RIGHT TEMPERATURE!



Chicks will huddle together under a light if they are too cold, or in the far corners of the brooder if they are too hot. Comfortable chicks will spend their time in evenly placed groups around the brooder.

WEEK	TEMP
0	95
1	90
2	85
3	80
4	75
5	70
6	65

