



Starter Guide to Raising Chicks

SPACE:

Your chicks will need to live in a brooder when they first come home. They will need enough room to move around comfortably. When chicks do not have enough space, they can peck at each other which can be a dangerous and hard habit to break.

Your chicks will need to live in the brooder for 12-14 weeks, so their growing size should be a consideration when choosing your brooder. The brooder will also need space for a feeder and waterer. You should plan a 1 sq. ft. of brooder space per chick. A small animal cage or stock tank doubles nicely as a brooder.

TEMPERATURE:

Baby chick need plenty of heat to survive. The brooder can be heated using a heat lamp and a 250-watt infrared bulb. Both white and red bulbs can be used. The temperature should be 90-100 degrees for the first week or two and can be reduced by 5 degrees each week until the chick begins feathering (6-8 weeks).

It is very important that you watch your chicks during this time as their behavior will tell you if the temperature is right. Your chicks should be dispersed around the brooder: some playing, some eating, and some sleeping. If the chicks are all huddled together under the light, then your chicks are too cold. If the chicks are spread out at the edges of the brooder and/or panting, then your chicks are too hot. You can adjust the temperature by raising/lowering the heat lamp.

WATER:

Your chicks must always have access to **clean, fresh water**. You will need to change the water at least once a day to keep it clean. Make sure your waterer base is not too deep or wide to prevent a chick from falling in and getting wet.

BEDDING:

Clean bedding is very important to the health of your chicks. Chicks are prone to many diseases; most can be avoided with proper sanitation. The litter should be changed every few days and never be allowed to remain damp.

We do not recommend using newspaper, as that can create a very slick surface for your chicks to walk on and cause damage to their legs. White shavings are a great bedding material and can be spread out along the bottom of the brooder. We recommend Nature's Shavings.

FEED:

There are many different options in feeding your baby chicks (see Feeding Guideline) but all include a chick starter.

We carry a medicated starter and an organic starter. Mix the starter with chick scratch in a 50/50 ratio. The chick scratch will help the chicks process food (preventing pasting).

PLAY:

Chicks are incredibly curious. After the first week, you can expose them to new objects in their brooder. Try adding leaves, vegetables and twigs and watch their curious exploration.

When the chicks are a month old you can add a roost to their brooder, about 4" off the floor. Use a stick or a wood rail. The chicks will jump on it and some may sleep there. Do not put the roost too close to the heat lamp as it will be too hot for them. Do not feed your chicks grass clippings.

HANDLING:

The best way to make friendly, calm chickens is to handle the chicks a lot. Do not be discouraged if your chicks run around squawking every time you reach your hand into the brooder at first.

Daily handling will eventually make your chicks people calm. Of course, hand feeding yummy morsels like bugs, yogurt and fruit helps a lot! Always wash your hands after handling your chicks.

