



GUY'S FARM and YARD

Raising Baby Chicks

Essentials for success include:

- Housing
- Proper temperature
- Food & water
- Cleanliness

Brooders - A chick's first home is called a "brooder". For one time use, a cardboard box works fine. A cage suitable for a rabbit or guinea pig is terrific & easy to clean. Shavings should be changed every couple of days & never allowed to remain damp. Cleanliness is very important at this stage. Baby chicks are prone to a number of diseases, most of which can be avoided with proper sanitation. The size of brooder depends on how many chicks you have - the chicks should have enough space in it for a waterer & feeder.

Heat - Prepare the brooding area with a 3" base of wood shavings. Provide heat to maintain a 90 degree hover temperature (with light bulb or heat lamp) for the first week. Lower the temperature 5 degrees per week over the next 4 weeks. Note that only part of the brooder needs to be this temperature, as the chicks need to be able to cool off when their bodies need to. If they are peeping a lot and loudly, they are too cold. Chicks should be kept indoors (or in a heated brooder) until they have their feathers ~ 5-8 weeks.

Water - Fresh water should be available at all times. When you first get baby chicks, dip their beaks in the water so they learn what it is. A chick will not eat without water for digestion. Provide a minimum of 1 gallon of fresh clean water/100 chicks/day. Provide 2 or more water fountains in different locations as chicks mature. It is highly recommended to mix vitamins & electrolytes with their water. This important stress pack helps the chicks off to a healthy start.

Feed - for chick layer birds:

First 8 weeks - Chick Starter

8-20 weeks - Grower-Cal

20+ weeks - Layer Pels

Feed - for chick meat birds:

First bag - Chick Starter

next 7 weeks - Broiler Crumbles or Game Bird Crumbles

7-8 weeks (market time) - Fat & Finish pellets

Organic Feed - for chick layer birds

First 8 weeks - Organic Chick Starter

8-20 weeks - Organic Chick/Broiler Grower Crumbles

20+ weeks - Organic Layer Pellets

Organic Feed - for chick meat birds

First bag - Organic Chick Starter

7-8 weeks (market time) Organic Chick/Broiler Grower Crumbles

Grit - Grit is small stones that the bird stores in its gizzard, where they act like teeth & are used to grind up food. Grit is necessary only if the chicks have access to grain or other foodstuffs. Chicks on mash or crumbles don't need it. Once the chicks are old enough to be running out on the ground they don't need to be supplied as they can pick it up naturally. **WARNING:** Do not give chicks oyster shell. It is not grit. Oyster shell is used to give laying hens extra calcium for egg-shell production. This extra calcium will cause bone development problems in young birds.

Roosting - Chickens do better when they roost at night up off the ground. It is the natural way for a bird to sleep. It helps prevent external parasites & keeps them from lying in their own droppings. You also don't want them to start sleeping in the nest boxes as these are for egg-laying. When the chicks are 1 month old, introduce chicks to roosting by placing a stick or narrow piece of wood about 4" off the floor. They get used to hopping up & sitting on this. As they grow & move to larger quarters raise the roost.

Checklist of essentials:

- Brooder
- Shavings
- Heat lamp
- Waterer
- Feeder
- Electrolytes
- Chick Starter
- Grit (8 weeks)