

# CHICK DAYS

## CHICK CARE QUICK TIPS

Take home these tips from Farm and Garden authority, P. Allen Smith.

**Congratulations on your new chicks!**

*I've been raising poultry since I was 10 years old. It's a great hobby that continues to provide me hours of enjoyment and plenty of fresh eggs. Here are a few guidelines that will help you get your chicks off to a good start.*



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Place the brooder in the box and on a flat surface so they won't slide if the vehicle comes to a sudden stop. If it is cold outside, keep the heater going inside.

**Once at Home** - Set up a brooding area. When I'm raising just few chicks (30 or less) I use a large cardboard box with walls at least 18-inches high and place the box in a safe area away from drafts and other household pets. Use a screen or a towel to cover the box. For larger numbers, a stock tank can be used in an enclosed, draft free outbuilding. Chicks need one-half square foot of space for the first two weeks. But they grow fast, so you will need to expand the area as they grow. After two weeks, increase to one square foot per bird. Do not use a plastic bin as a brooder area. The brooder lamp can melt the plastic, fall into the litter and start a fire.

**Keeping Them Warm** - Chicks need to be kept in a warm place until they are fully feathered.

The temperature at the bottom of the box should be 95-100 degrees for the first two weeks and then reduced 5 degrees each week until they are about a month old. I use a brooder lamp clipped over one side of the brooding area so the chicks can choose whether to be under the light or not. If chicks are crowded together directly under the heat source, then they are cold. If they are around the edges of the brooder, then they are too hot. Adjust the height of the lamp accordingly and give them enough room to move in and out of the light to regulate their body temperature.

**Bedding** - Provide bedding to catch and absorb their droppings and change this daily. I line the floor of my box with sheets of newspaper and then cover it with chopped straw, then just roll up the paper, straw and all, and throw it away. If using newspaper, make sure to cover with bedding such as 2-3" of wood chips, oat hulls or ground cobs (not finely ground), so the surface won't be too slippery for the chicks. Without firm footing their legs will not develop correctly, making them spraddle-legged.

**Food and Water** - Set out water and chick starter feed in separate containers. Keep both food and water clean and free of droppings. Dip the chicks' beaks in the water to get them started drinking. A chick waterer is by far the best way to give chicks water. Saucers or other make-shift containers spill easily making the brooder wet and unsanitary. Never let the chicks go without water. Start chicks on a 20% protein (24% protein for broilers) starter ration. At eight weeks old, switch chicks to 18-19% chick grower.

**Odds and Ends** - Chicks love to roost when they're resting. Provide roosting poles or stacks of bricks so chicks have a place to perch a few inches off the ground to keep them from roosting on the waterer and feeder. As the chicks start to feather, on warm days put them in a wire pen outside for short periods of time in a draft free area. Keep an eye on them and provide a tray of sand so they can dust. As you work with the chicks, remember that slow movements are less apt to frighten them. Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water after handling or working around the chicks. Salmonella, a common cause of food borne illness, can be spread by direct contact with animals that carry the bacteria. Hygiene is very important to keep your birds, you and your family healthy.

### SUPPLIES

As you pick up your chicks, be sure and get all the supplies you'll need.

Wood Shavings For Bedding  
Duramycin Soluble Powder 6.4 Oz. Pkt.

#### Chick Feeder

7 Lb. Plastic Hanging Feeder  
10 Lb. Plastic Hanging Feeder  
Plastic Flip-Top Feeder

#### Poultry Feed

20 Lb. 20% Poultry Starter  
50 Lb. 20% Poultry Starter  
50 Lb. 24% Poultry Starter

#### Chick Waterer

1 Gal. Plastic Fountain  
1 Qt. Screw-On Jar  
1 Qt. Plastic Screw-On Base

Brooder Reflector Lamp And Heat Bulb  
Lamp With Clamp  
250 Watt Clear Bulb  
250 Watt Red Bulb



For more care tips from P Allen Smith and Tractor Supply, or for special offers  
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