

PASSION *for* PETS

Chicken Information Care Sheet



Check list

- Coop
- Seed mix
- Heat for chicks
- Chook Waterer
- Floor covering
- Vitamin & mineral supplement
- Shell Grit
- Coop run
- Laying box
- Chook pellets
- Chook Feeder

Chicks 0-6 weeks old

Your baby chickens require virtually **constant heat** from birth to 6 weeks. Initially for the first week, heating to about 35 degrees centigrade should be required. You can achieve this heat by various means:-

1. A small heat lamp or 60watt red light globe or desk lamp positioned about a foot or so away from where they will sleep, making sure if it becomes too hot, they have space to move away.
2. Using normal household heating systems you can tell if the chickens are warm enough by their behavior, ie, if they are cold they will huddle together and chirp noisily. If warm enough they will sleep most of the first few days if quite young.
3. A hot water bottle can be used, although care should be taken to refill every two or three hours as it cools. Sudden cold nights can be a problem to baby chicks, and they can catch a cold and die very easily.
4. If you have a broody hen this is the perfect way to keep baby chicks warm. Introduce the day old chicks under the hen on the first night and next morning she will think she has hatched them. She will rear them as her own, teaching them to feed and find refuge under her warm wings at night. She will protect them from other chooks as well.

Feeding your chicks is relatively easy. They will love pullet starter feed for baby chicks which is especially formulated for all poultry babies with a natural antibiotic to help prevent chills. This feed is suitable until they are about 8 weeks old; then a grower feed can be substituted and fed until they are 16 weeks old, then layers feed should be given. A special container for water should be used for the first week or so, as they can fall in and drown quite easily. Just Pets sell various sized chook feeders and water containers for baby chicks, and chickens of all ages.

You can gradually decrease your heating system at about 5 - 6 weeks old, when they are just about fully feathered, and they can then stay outside. They need a dry, snug area to sleep in, away from draughts. Care should be taken at this stage if left outside to free range as cats, dogs, hawks and even crows are common predators, and be aware of foxes too. Laying of eggs usually begins at around 24 weeks of age.

Handle Baby Chicks Gently Please!!!!

Pullets 6-14 weeks old

When you get them home, put them in their coop, and leave them to settle in for a couple of days undisturbed. This will enable them to find feed, water, nesting boxes and perching and therefore relate to home'. If joining other chooks, you may need to separate them for a couple of days in case of bullying. It is not wise to mix different sizes and ages in chooks. They may need to be lifted onto the perch the first night or two. Don't let them sleep in the nesting box.

NESTING BOXES - Ideally straw or wood shavings should be in the nesting box and a cover of some sort over the front of the box also, to give darkness and privacy when laying.

FEEDING - Feed them high protein layers feed, about 18% protein, as an egg is basically protein. Just Pets recommend and sells pellets and grains, make sure they are eat their food, as a day or two without eating will send them off the lay! Please don't feed your chickens anything mouldy, as this may cause a crop infection and eventually lead to death. Be aware of mould if they have access to the compost! Most household scraps are suitable if free from mould, and your chooks will enjoy them. They will particularly love picking at vegetable peelings, meat scraps and table leftovers. Clean water should be available at all times. Worming and vitamins can be added to their water for treatment.

LAYING - Chooks will lay on average, 3-4 eggs per week each, slightly more in summer and slightly less in winter, due to light variation. You can help maintain egg production over winter by installing a light in the shed etc. Turn it on at about 5:30pm. Turn it off at bedtime.

EGGS - It is important to collect the eggs at least daily to prevent breakages and soiling. The first eggs will be small pullet - size, but will increase in size with time. Your chickens should lay for roughly 12 months before they go into their first moult and stop for a while. If you find the eggs are becoming soft shelled it is best you provide them with shell grit to increase their calcium intake. The eggs should be stored in the fridge especially in hot weather.

DUST BATHS - Your chickens will love a dry, dusty area of the garden in which to dust bath. This is an effective way to keep them free from mites, which are carried by wild and local birds. We do stock a dusting powder for control of mites, along with other poultry equipment and supplies.

HEAT - In summer, when it is very hot, please check your hens for heat stress as frequent hosing may be necessary if they are suffering. Extreme heat can affect egg laying. If you require additional advice, feel free to contact us.

Laying Pullets and Starter Hens 15-24 weeks old

Although not requiring any further heating, your chickens still requires protective housing in a dry sheltered area, free from draughts. It may be allowed to roam outside in a secured run, protected from cats, dogs, crows and hawks, but make sure you lock them up at night, in a fox proof coop.

Straw or wood shavings can be spread on the floor of the coop and also put into the nesting box. A perch can be installed for the chickens to roost on at night, and you should train it to sleep on the perch.

You can feed the chickens on Growers feed especially formulated for growing chickens. By about 15 weeks, you can change the feed to a combination of Layers Pellets and Chicken Grain, in readiness for egg formation. Household scraps can be introduced, but make sure they are free from mould. Don't forget some shell grit!

Your chicken will start to lay eggs at about 22 weeks: the eggs are small initially but become bigger as time goes by. At this stage, you can install a light (60 watt globe) in your shed or coop over winter adjusting it so there is about 17 hours light, which promotes egg maturity.

Please lock them up at night in a secure fox proof coop or pen!!!!