

Prepare carefully for arrival of baby chicks



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experience for young and old alike. As with all newborns, proper care and nutrition are key ingredients in the recipe for success.

Similar to preparing a nursery for a newborn baby, start cleaning houses and brooding areas about two weeks in advance. Remove dust, dirt, cobwebs, and any foreign material that could be unsafe if eaten by a curious baby chick. Once generally clean, disinfect the house or enclosure using an appropriate household cleaner. After the area is dry, bed the area with dry wood shavings or dry sawdust.

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Raising a group of baby chicks from just after hatching to adulthood can be a rewarding educational

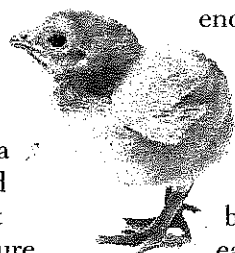
experience for young and old alike. As with all newborns, proper care and nutrition are key ingredients in the recipe for success. Similar to preparing a nursery for a newborn baby, start cleaning houses and brooding areas about two weeks in advance. Remove dust, dirt, cobwebs, and any foreign material that could be unsafe if eaten by a curious baby chick. Once generally clean, disinfect the house or enclosure using an appropriate household cleaner. After the area is dry, bed the area with dry wood shavings or dry sawdust. Chicks that are raised without a mother hen to keep them warm must be provided with a brooder area. This area will consist of an appropriate heat lamp and a "brooder ring" to keep the chicks near the heat source. Before the chicks arrive, this area should be covered with newspapers to help prevent the chicks from consuming the litter. In the beginning, the temperature should be 90° Fahrenheit at 2.5 inches above the litter. By adjusting the height of the heat lamp, reduce the temperature 5 degrees per week until 70° is reached. Chicks are able to "tell" you when they are uncomfortable. If they huddle with each other and cheep in loud, shrill and discontented tone, they are too cold. Conversely, if chicks move far from the heat source, the temperature is too high. When the area is properly ventilated but not drafty and at the proper temperature, chicks will cheep contentedly, letting you know that things are "just right."

After creating the right environment, clean and prepare equipment for feeding and watering. A solution using 1 tablespoon of chlorine bleach per gallon of water makes a suitable disinfectant. After feeders and waterers are clean, disinfected, and dry, feeders should be placed in a pattern that resembles spokes in a wheel with the waterers placed in between. As a general rule, use

two small, quart-sized waterers and 48 inches of double-sided feeder space per 100 chicks. Of course, these requirements increase with time. Replace the smaller waterers with gallon-sized ones and allow three linear inches of feeder space as chicks get older. The newspaper bedding can be removed after four days, and the brooder ring can be removed between days seven and 10.

Fill waterers with clean water as chicks will not drink enough if water is soiled or contaminated. I suggest washing waterers daily and disinfecting weekly. Baby chicks raised without a mother hen have to be encouraged to begin to eat. Upon arrival, have the feeders filled and place some chick starter crumbles on an egg flat or paper plate so that chicks can easily see the feed. Once chicks begin to eat from feeders, that should become their sole source of feed.

Use a commercial chick starter that contains 18-percent to 22-percent crude protein, relatively high energy, the appropriate amino acid balance, and proper fortification with vitamins and minerals. Co-op Chick Starter/Grower (#104) is a very appropriate feed for



the first weeks of life. Modern types of poultry grow very rapidly and have high nutritional demands. As tempting as it may be, resist the urge to "supplement" the chicks with additional corn, wheat, or other grains. Doing so could cause dietary imbalances and retard growth.

Whether the chicks are broilers (meat-type) or layers (egg-type) will determine what type of feed should be provided next. Broilers could utilize a grower/finisher, and at about 20 weeks old, pullets should be introduced to an appropriate layer feed. Co-op manufactures a fantastic layer ration in mash, crumbled, or pelleted form.

Following the above suggestions and administering an appropriate animal health program should have your poultry project well on the road to success. Don't forget daily management practices to help keep chicks clean, dry, and well-fed. Observe the flock for health and remove any sick individuals. Keep records and utilize resources such as a veterinarian or Extension agent. And stop by your Co-op for feeders, waterers, feed, and medication along with friendly advice on animal production.