

SIEGEL'S COUNTRY STORE

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How to Raise and Care for Chickens

January, 2015

Day Old Chicks Need: Heat – Feed – Water – Bedding

Keep Chicks at a Temperature of 90° - 95° for the first week and free of drafts.

HEAT: Judge the height of the heat bulb - If chicks are huddled together, you need to lower the heat source. If they are not underneath, but trying to get to the corners, it is too hot, you need to raise the bulb. Approximately 20 inches from chicks is a good place to start. Raise weekly as chicks grow.

You can discontinue heat bulb when room temperature is maintained around 70 degrees.

However, use caution at night when it gets cool, they will pile on top of one another and smother to try to keep warm.

WATER: Provide water as soon as possible, it is recommended to use a vitamin electrolyte source in the water for the first week. **NEVER** allow chicks to run out of water. Keep waterers clean. After a couple of days, put a block of wood under feeders and waterers to keep birds from scratching out feed or getting litter in the water, elevate feeders and waterers as they grow.

FEED: Chicks should have feed at all times. We recommend a 22% medicated starter for all layer and broiler chicks.

Broilers Feeding Program: Start with a 22% medicated feed which can be used throughout their entire growing period or if you prefer, can be switched to a non-mediated finisher.

Layers Feeding Program: Start with a 22% medicated feed. At approximately two to three months of age, switch to a 19% 'grower' feed. Just prior to starting to lay, between five to six months, put them on a 17% 'complete' layer program.

BEDDING: Keep litter clean, wood shavings are recommended as a clean source of bedding. Keep Chicks free from drafts.

HEALTH

Chicks are generally easy to raise with few health problems. When chicks are very young, watch for 'pasting up.' This is when the feces is a pasty substance that sticks to the chick, this needs to be washed off with warm water and then dried. This should not be a problem after the first week or two.

Most chick loss is not due to health issues but rather predators that can be a problem. Cats, hawks, weasels, rats, mink all love the taste of chicken! You need to have a secure area to keep the chicks safe. Even a small entry hole in a pen can make them easy prey.

Broilers will be mature after only 6 - 7 weeks. We recommend keeping the birds on a high protein diet since they are growing so rapidly. **DO NOT** keep the lights on 24 hours per day – they need time to rest to avoid the leg issues that can develop when they are approaching a heavy weight.

Layers will begin laying eggs at around 6 months of age. They will first lay pee wee eggs, then maybe a double yolk egg and then settle into a pattern of normal egg laying. Layers can be productive for several years depending on the breed.

Molting: This is a natural occurrence for egg laying chickens at about 1 year of age. They will stop laying, lose their feathers, the combs will become dull. This generally happens in September or October and will last approximately 2 months. When they are finished with the molting process they will begin a new egg laying cycle.

Birds in confinement may enjoy table scraps such as greens, lettuce, melon rinds as a treat. They should be fed a complete layer as their main source of feed.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are the birds picking each other?

- When the birds get new feathers they may pick at the new growth. If they are picking each other to the point of drawing blood or causing mortality it can be that there are too many birds in too small of a space. The birds may not have adequate feed, water, or ventilation. They may have improper nutrition – they need a complete layer or broiler ration. Sometimes there is a dominant bird in the flock that is a trouble maker.

Why are the birds eating their own eggs?

- Always gather the eggs as quickly as possible after they have been laid. If there is inadequate space for the amount of hens and several have to lay in the same nest, there is the risk of having the eggs crushed. Once hens get a taste of eating eggs it can be almost impossible to get stopped, it is best to avoid the issue by having adequate space for a trouble free flock.

Why do the birds stop laying during the cold winter or heat of summer?

- You can maintain production during the winter and summer months by keeping an open water source and at least 12 – 15 hours of light per day. Egg production is most effected by water. Frozen waterers in winter or dry waterers in the summer will stop egg production almost immediately. If water is not provided for an extended period of time, you will force the birds into a molt and it will be a long period before they will again begin to lay eggs.

When the temperature drops below 50 degrees, the amount of feed will increase. Rule of thumb is for every 10 degrees decrease in temperature, the feed consumption will increase 5%. A well-insulated chicken coop will save feed and provide a good environment for your flock.

A Word of Caution: If you plan to add to your flock – be careful of introducing birds from a flea market, or auction. Bring those birds home and isolate them away from your flock for a few weeks. Or get birds from a local healthy source.

It is also a good idea to occasionally dust your birds for lice using a poultry dust, this is usually a **Sevin** or **Carboryl** dust that is safe and often used for vegetables as well as poultry, dogs and cats.

If you have questions, please ask us, we are always willing to help you take the best care possible of your animals, if we don't know the answers – we know someone who does!

Sincerely, The Siegel's at Siegel's Country Store www.siegelscountrystore.com

'CHICK' SUPPLIES AVAILABLE HERE AT SIEGEL'S

April, 2014

HEAT

Heat shield and bulb: Use 125 or 250 watts bulbs depending on how big your pen is and the number of birds you have. Reminder: Chicks need to be kept at a temperature between 90° to 95°.

COOP

For the first several weeks, make sure your chicks are protected from predators such as cats, weasels, etc. Putting your young chicks in a cardboard box in the garage will keep them protected and safe.

FEED

Start with a medicated feed for the first couple weeks. This feed is not a hormone or antibiotic, but an approved medication for the prevention of coccidiosis. After that, you can keep them on the medicated feed or switch to a non-medicated grower/finisher until they are ready for market or to lay eggs. If you are raising layers, we have a three-step feeding program.

WATER

It is recommended that you add a powder containing vitamins and electrolytes to the water source to get your birds off to a healthy start. During the heat of the summer or other stressful conditions, it is also recommended to add the vitamin/electrolyte powder to keep the birds well hydrated.

BEDDING

It is really important to keep chicks clean and dry. We recommend using pine shavings.

LICE CONTROL on LAYERS

Chickens naturally need to dust. It's their natural way to control parasites. You can add **Diatomaceous Earth** to the dusting bed to eliminate parasites. It can also be added to their feed as a natural wormer.

NEW LINE OF SPECIALTY ITEMS _ Check out our new line of poultry (layer) specialty additions. Treats, egg wipes, egg wash, scratch grains, oyster shell, and grit, poultry conditioner

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