



Pahoia School Gala and Agricultural Day

Chicken Rearing Guide

Chickens must be obtained from school to be entered in Ag Day, must be hand reared and in the child's care by 14 days old.

Care:

Normally your chick would have a mother hen keeping it warm under her wings, and showing it how to eat and drink and peck and scratch. That's your job as you raise it. You need to keep your chicks safe and warm, and make sure they always have fresh food and water. They're little and don't understand about keeping things clean and tidy - that's going to be your job at least twice a day while they are growing up.

Supplies and Gear required:

- Chicken Starter Crumbles (available from Farmlands Te Puna, PGG Wrightsons and other feed merchants). Keep feed in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight.
- Never feed chickens mouldy food as it can make them sick.
- Safe box with straw or pine shavings and heated lamp - Box can be size of wine box or bigger.
- Plastic feeder for water and feed for your chicks (available from Takanini Feeds and other feed merchants).
- Larger, contained, area on grass that provides protection from cats, dogs, hawks and larger chickens.

Vaccines:

Your chick will be 1 week old when you collect it and will have had the vaccines they require.

Housing Requirements

When you bring your baby chicks home they need to stay very warm in their box. Think about how warm it would be under a mother hen's wings. The temperature in their box should be about 33 degrees Celsius for the first week reduced down weekly until it is about 15 degrees Celsius. A forty or sixty watt bulb hung over the box and about 30 cm above the chicken will provide a good temperature. Make sure it's not touching anything that could heat up and burn.

If you don't have a heat lamp setup, you can keep them in their warm box, in the hot water cupboard for the first couple of nights until you get the lamp.

During the first 2-3 days your chicks will need to be in a small area (their box) close to the light so they know where the heat source is. Don't let the chicks get into corners away from the heat source as they may die of the cold, suffocate or be crushed.

Keep their box or cage clean at all times - twice a day is good. Feed and droppings need to be cleaned out. Don't leave your chicks on wet dirty newspaper as they can become sick very easily if they are wet, dirty and cold.

As the chickens grow, so should the area they live in.

Feeding:

1-2 Weeks:

- Feed Chicken Starter Crumbles as they have the right balance of minerals and vitamins for raising healthy chickens. NRM Chick Starter also contains a coccidiostat to protect young chicks.
- Start with about a tablespoon of crumbles mixed with water in a flat bowl so it's like porridge, per chick twice a day. Increase the amount a little each day as they are growing. You can also scatter some dry crumbles on the ground so they learn how to peck their food.
- By the end of the first week you can leave the food in with the chicks so they can feed when they are hungry. You will need to clean the bowl out before you fill it each time.
- By the end of the second week, if it is warm outside, you can put the chicks into a safe, contained area (covered to protect from cats or hawks or bigger chooks) outside so they can peck at grass and soil during the day. Give them their food and water as well. Make sure there is a covered area that they can nestle in if it should get wet or cold during the day.
- At night they need to be brought back inside to their box with their light for warmth.
- Chick Starter crumbles can be fed to chicks up to age 6-8 weeks. They can then be fed grower feed pellets or mash. Gradually replace the crumbles with the mash or pellets.
- Your chicks will also enjoy spinach and silverbeet, and comfrey.

6-8 Weeks Plus:

- Feed Grower feed for chicks aged 6-16 weeks.

16 Weeks Plus:

- Feed Layer hens mash or pellets

Water:

- Chicks need easy access to fresh clean water in a container that they can reach, but set out so that the chicks can't get wet by walking in it. Put stones or marbles in the dish so the chicks can't get too wet or drown.
- Water needs to be kept clean and fresh. Chicks can die if they do not start drinking by the time they are 4 days old. When you first put them in their box you can dip their little beak in the water gently so they know where it is.

Handy Hints:

- Chickens are blind in the dark.
- Control scaly mites on chicken legs by wiping vaseline or vegetable oil on the leg.
- Pine needles and pine shavings make excellent litter to absorb droppings and moisture.
- Chickens need fresh air, fresh water and sunshine to help them stay healthy.
- Reduce stress or fear in chicks by talking quietly or singing softly when you are around them.
- These plants are toxic to chickens so do not feed them or give them access: avocado, kowhai, green potatoes, rhubarb, parsnip, parsley, celery, sorrel, fathen, oxalis, lily of the valley, oleander, box.
- Allow a minimum of square metre of space for your chicks when they are up to 6 weeks old. Up to 7-18 weeks old; 2 sq metres and after that more than 3 sq metres.
- If your chickens free range during the day, to allow for wet days and for the 15 hours of darkness in winter it's better to have a density of 6-7 birds per square metre in the coop they sleep in at night.
- Further reference: www.lifestyleblock.co.nz and www.facebook.com/yourpoultry

Judging

- **Diary:** This should include the child's journey with taking care of the chicken and how much the chicken has changed over time. It could also include observations the child has made about the care they have had to undertake in their animal husbandry. Photos and graphs of the animals growth could also be included to show progress throughout the weeks of care.
- **Rearing-** The children will be asked questions about the care and feeding of their chicken and the judge will be checking to see it is healthy and has been well cared for. This means that it will have bright eyes, clean legs (without mites), and the bird is well covered and comfortable.
- **Handling** - The judge will ask children to take their chicken out of its cage and hold it for a minute while they examine it.

After Ag Day

- You can switch to a grower feed at around 8 weeks or carry on with Chicken Starter Crumbles.
- They will begin to lay eggs at 18-20 weeks when you will need to start them on a layer feed.
- Chickens require a warm dry house (coop) with a perch and nesting area. This needs to protect the chicken from dogs and cats. They will be quite happy roaming the arden during the day but should be shut in the coop at night for safety. They will also appreciate somewhere to jump on and roost. A thin broom handle across the hutch at about 15cm off the ground works well.

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT THE HEALTH OF YOUR CHICKEN, PLEASE CONTACT KATIKATI OR TE PUNA VETS. THEY ARE HAPPY TO GIVE ADVICE OVER

THE PHONE ON WHETHER AN ANIMAL REQUIRES TREATMENT. DON'T LEAVE IT TOO LATE!