

## Chick and Chicken 101

I hope you will find the following information to be useful in raising and keeping your chicks and chickens. It is just one of many ways and many methods of chicken keeping.

A few good books are: Storey's Guide to Raising Chickens and The Complete Idiots Guide to Raising Chickens.

Most importantly! Enjoy your new feathered friends!!!

### **CARE OF CHICKS 101: The Basics In One Page (for baby chicks)**

By Roselyn Johnson, Owner of Austin's Best Poultry <http://austinsbestpoultry.com/>

#### A Funny Thing About Chicks

- Chicks sleep in all sorts of ways!
- Do NOT panic if you look in on your chicks and one is sleeping on it's side or on it's head or splayed out like it's been squashed. Chicks are babies and pretty much fall asleep when and where and how it's convenient :-)
- A slight noise or gentle touch will usually wake the chick. Sometimes they are deeply asleep, let them sleep and check in on them in a few hours.

#### Warmth and Brooder Box:

- Chicks need heat for about 8 weeks or until they are fully feathered.
- Using a 90 or 100 watt incandescent lightbulb (red preferably - you can find one in the "mood lamp" bulb section at Lowes) provide heat for the chicks.
- Week 1 should be 90 degrees. Decrease it by 5 degrees every week by raising the heat lamp.
- Have the heat lamp at one end of the box so the chicks can escape the heat if it is too hot.
- If the chicks huddle together they are too cold, if they scatter out they are too hot.
- Chicks need a brooder box to keep in heat and keep out drafts.
- A plastic tub or sturdy box is good and easily cleaned or replaced.
- Use paper towels (NOT newspaper or anything slippery) for the first few days.
- Use PINE shavings after that and keep them clean and dry.
- Do not cover the box, chicks need lots of fresh air, just not drafts.

#### Feed and Water:

- Medicated chick feed is fine as is an all natural chick feed.
- Feed free choice and as much as the chicks will eat.
- Always have fresh water available.
- Put small stones in the water so a chick can climb out if they get in the water dish.
- The medicated feed is used to protect against Coccidiosis. As the drug needs to build up in the chick's system to offer protection use it exclusively if you choose this feed.
- Chicks do not need the amount of calcium a layer chicken does.
- If feeding processed crumble or pellets do not feed chicks layer ration.
- If feeding a natural feed with oyster shells added for calcium chicks will avoid the oyster shell and can be fed layer ration after 6 to 8 weeks on starter feed.
- Do not feed scratch until the chicks are several weeks old and only as a treat.
- Chick grit or coarse sand should be offered free choice. Grit is needed throughout a chicken's life.

#### Hints:

- Add ¼ cup apple cider vinegar to each gallon of drinking water to help keep your chicks and chickens worm free.
- If the chicks start feather picking or toe picking they are likely overcrowded. Move the chicks to a bigger brooder area and use Desitin (it tastes bad) on the battered chick and/or remove it until it heals.
- Chicks often start to fly at 2 to 3 weeks old (depending on the breed).
- Use "chick furniture" to introduce older chicks to adults or older chicks.
- Invert a box, cut chick sized archways in all 4 sides.
- Scatter the boxes around the coop and run and put a brick on top so they can't blow away.
- Make sure to have some near the food and water.
- The chicks will rapidly learn to run under the box to avoid bigger chickens until the chicks have been accepted into the flock.
- Storey's Guide To Raising Chickens in a well respected book on chicken keeping.

## CHICKEN KEEPING 101: The Basics In One Page (for adult chickens)

By Roselyn Johnson, Owner of Austins Best Poultry <http://austinsbestpoultry.com/>

A few chicken facts:

- Chickens are omnivores. They eat vegetables and meat/protein, etc.
- Chickens have a body temperature of about 103 degrees (this will be important later).
- Not all chickens lay an egg each day. See the "Henderson's Chicken Chart" for comparisons <http://www.ithaca.edu/staff/jhenderson/chooks/chooks.html>
- Pullet (female under 1 yr), Hen (female over 1 year), cockerel (male under 1 year), cock or rooster (male over 1 year). Bantam (small chicken), standard (large chicken).
- Most pullets begin to lay by 6 months of age. Life-span 5 to 7 years and up to 20 years!

Housing:

- Protect against predators by using ½" hardware cloth or other strong wire mesh on the coop.
- Protect against wind and rain, chickens can withstand Texas winter temps as long as they can get out of the wind, drafts, and rain. This is where the high body temps and feathers come in :-)
- Good ventilation is a must to keep your chickens healthy though!
- Nesting box 18 to 24" off the ground and sized about 12"x12"x12" with straw or pine shavings in it. 4 hens to a box.
- Roost 18" to 24" off the ground with a diameter of about 2" and 10" of space per bird.
- Size: Rule of thumb is about 2-3 square feet per chicken inside the coop and 4-5 square feet per chicken in an outside run. Give them 10 sq. ft. per bird if they will be confined all of the time. Cover outdoor runs to protect against hawks.
- Have food and water available at all times in the coop.
- Pine shavings or straw or rice hulls or peat moss make good bedding and absorb droppings.

Feed and water:

- Have feed and fresh water available at all times.
- Grit (small rocks) is very necessary to allow your chickens to grind their food.
- Feed needs to be dry and fresh (no moldy or wet food) and water needs to be changed daily.
- Feed types vary from processed layer pellets/crumbles to Non-GMO feed to organic feed.
- Extras or treats include scratch, meal worms, vegetables, yogurt, meat, etc. A good list of poisonous plants can be found at: <http://www.poultryhelp.com/toxicplants.html>. Avoid table scraps with lots of salt, grease, spices, sugar.
- Add ¼ cup apple cider vinegar per gallon drinking water to help keep your chickens worm free.

General care:

- Summer time – fresh, cool water.
- Ample shade.
- Lots of ventilation and fresh air.
- Winter time – protected from north and east wind.
- Protected from wet – rain or bedding or floor.
- Drinking water – fresh and ice free.
- Cleaning – if you can smell it just think what it's like at their level!
- Sanitation of dishes and regular, fresh bedding helps keep diseases away.
- Diatomaceous earth liberally sprinkled on bedding helps keep bugs off your chickens.

Chicken Health Links

- The following are some helpful links for diagnosing chicken illnesses and general poultry management.
- Backyardchickens.com
- Texas A&M has a variety of publications that are useful: [http://posc.tamu.edu/extensionprograms/publications/index\\_publications.htm](http://posc.tamu.edu/extensionprograms/publications/index_publications.htm)
- General diagnostic chart: [http://www.apa-abayouthpoultryclub.org/Edu\\_Material/Poultry%20Diseases/EXTERNAL%20SYMPTOMS%20FOR%20DIAGNOSING%20POULTRY%20DISEASES.pdf](http://www.apa-abayouthpoultryclub.org/Edu_Material/Poultry%20Diseases/EXTERNAL%20SYMPTOMS%20FOR%20DIAGNOSING%20POULTRY%20DISEASES.pdf)
- Common chick illness: [http://www.clemson.edu/public/lph/ahp/disease\\_links/images/coccidia.pdf](http://www.clemson.edu/public/lph/ahp/disease_links/images/coccidia.pdf)
- Is that poo normal (seriously, you will wonder)?? Here's pics: <http://www.chat.allotment.org.uk/index.php?topic=17568.0%3Cbr%3E%3Cbr%3EHere>
- The Chicken Doctor - some useful articles: <http://www.firststatevetsupply.com/content/category/4/7/43/>
- Toxic plants - a must for anyone free ranging their chickens!: <http://www.poultryhelp.com/toxicplants.html>
- Common Poultry Diseases with Symptom Charts at the end of the document! Really helpful! <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ps044>