



# Caring Guide for Your New Baby Chicks

by Matthew Nelson, Farmer, Grade Eh Farms



Things you need to know in caring for the new fuzzy addition to your backyard or homestead:

- 1. You will need a brooder box.** It can be as simple as a storage container or you can build one like ours. You can use sand, 1/4" hardware cloth or pine wood shavings for the floor of the brooder. Shavings are our preferred method. Shavings can be dusty but absorbent. We find the best shavings at Otter Co-op.
- 2. The chicks will need heat.** A broody hen will work but if you don't have one of those around you should probably get a heat lamp or a ceramic bulb heater to keep the bottom of the brooder for chicks as close as possible to 95° F. for the first week. You can decrease the temperature by 5° per week. Once they have a good portion of their feathers you can move them outside. A good rule of thumb, if you are outside in a light jacket and get cold chances are the chicks will get cold too. You might want to provide an outside source of heat or wait to move them out of your garage. Make sure brooder lamps are secured and away from flammable material.
- 3. Feed & water.** The chicks require a 22-24% starter and a water dish that they won't fall in or try to go swimming. As they grow, please read our guide to raising and feeding juvenile pullets. Since there are numerous feeds available you will need to follow manufacturers guidelines for appropriate feeding. Once they are laying you can try your hand at things like growing meal worms or fermenting feed to supplement their diet. We do a combination of pasture, pellets, and fodder system for our birds.
- 4. Watch for leg issues.** Chicks are very resilient but if you notice any leg issues you can let us know right away so it can be fixed. Leg issues can be caused by a variety of reasons, the number one reason we've found is slippery surfaces such as brooder floors that can cause slipped hocks or tendons or splayed leg. It's also important to keep feed and water readily available.
- 5. Simple bio security.** As a precaution you should wash your hands prior to handling chicks and after. As irresistibly fluffy and cute as they are, you should not let them run around your house or snuggle with them. Try not to track anything into their area. If you have the flu or cold, you should wear a mask around your birds.
- 6. Tips on pasty butt.** If your chicks get pasty bums from fluctuating temperature or stress related to shipping or handling, you can add play sand to the brooder to fix the issue. Check daily and don't let the accumulation of dropping prevent the chick from going potty. I don't know the "science behind" what it is about the sand that resolves the issue, but I do know it works. Additional cleaning may be necessary but not likely. Another tip: chicks aren't like dogs and cats, you won't notice them going number one, or little puddles of pee in the brooder box. You will only see droppings. No cause for concern.
- 7. Where to get supplies.** Vendors that supply chick equipment are Westway Feed, Otter Coop, Jonkman Equipment Ltd. and through Homestead Junction.

More information is readily available online or by sending us an email. If you have any suggestions for this publication please contact us.

## Shopping List of Supplies Before Baby Chicks Arrive:



For questions,  
email us at  
gradeehfarms  
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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heating device             | <input type="checkbox"/> Waterer                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red heating lamp (not LED) | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeder                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 22-24% feed                | <input type="checkbox"/> Recyclable or Reusable Container |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shavings                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sand                             |

[www.gradeehfarms.ca](http://www.gradeehfarms.ca)

