

Some Useful Information About Caring for Day Old Chicks

Chicks should initially be kept in a warm brooder box, which should be kept inside and away from draughts. Ideally, provide a cardboard box, covered at the top and lined with newspaper on the floor of the box.

Young chicks, as with babies, are not able to maintain their own body heat so an artificial heat source is needed. You should seriously consider purchasing an infra-red brooder globe which provides an excellent source of heat. Use of an ordinary light bulb is **not** recommended as this provides insufficient warmth.

The brooder box should be set up and ready for the arrival of the chicks. You should aim for a brooder box temperature of 35°C at first, and gradually decrease this to 30°C over the first seven days. Reduce this temperature over the next four weeks to around 20°C. To monitor the brooder box temperature, place a thermometer on the floor of the box, but not directly under the heat source. As an indication, if the chicks are too cold they will huddle together for warmth. The box should be large enough to allow the chicks to move away from the heat source if they feel too warm.

It is vital that the temperature is maintained around the clock.

Water

Chicks should be provided with water prior to receiving their first starter crumble. Altona can supply chick drinker bottles, or alternatively you may provide a shallow dish with an inverted jar or similar in the middle to prevent the chicks from falling in to the water. Be careful that spilled water does not wet the newspaper in the bottom of the box. As they grow, they should be given water from a drinker.

A constant water supply is essential once the chooks are laying. Even a brief disruption to their supply of water can cause an interruption to laying.

Diet

We recommend feeding the chicks only Chick Starter Crumble containing a Coccidiostat for the first 6 – 8 weeks. This should be followed by grower crumbles for the 8 – 16 weeks until the pullets are old enough to lay, approximately 16 – 18 weeks of age. Once laying commences feed layer pellets.

Hy-line Brown hens are bred to lay lots of eggs; for them to do so they must have a balanced feed ration.

- Feed them prepared layer crumbles or pellets
- Place the feed in a hopper, not scattered on the ground
- Hens will not over-eat; on a balanced ration they will consume only what they need
- Fresh clean water must be available at all times

Poultry will also benefit from eating shell grit to help them grind their food in their crop and, when laying eggs, to provide calcium to assist in the laying of well-formed eggs

Kitchen scraps may be feed to adult chooks but should not be their main source of food. Limit feeding of scraps to late afternoon to ensure that the hens get an adequate intake of the balanced feed.

*This information is intended as a guide only.
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