

RAISING BROILERS FOR SHOW

Housing Requirements

The ideal house should have closable sides to protect from wind and rain and help control temperature. Use light colored roofing or paint the roof white. A white roof will reflect up to 80% of the heat rays. Silver or darker colored tin will absorb heat and keep the house hotter in warm times of the year. Locate the house under or near a large shade tree to help keep the house cool naturally. Dark colored tarps, used on the outside wall, also absorb heat.

Size

Each bird should have approximately 3-4 square feet of floor space after 21 days of age.

Feeders

Feeders should be round tube type with a large lip that can be hung from the ceiling to be raised as the chicks grow. At least 1 feeder should be provided for every 15 birds.

Waterers

Waterers should be plastic and be able to be hung or raised easily as the chicks grow. Plastic is best as it can easily be cleaned and sterilized. Waterers should be sterilized daily with a 10% bleach solution to prevent bacteria build-up. Chicks drink 10 lbs of water to 1 lb of feed. Chicks will grow much better with clean water. At least 1 waterer should be provided for every 15 birds.

Litter

Fine wood shavings are the best choice for litter as long as they are not dusty. Start off with a 4" thick layer and add fresh litter as needed. Litter material needs to be removed if it gets wet. Regular turning of the shavings will increase life of shavings.

The shavings should be covered with cloth for the first 5 days to prevent the chick from eating the shavings.

Heating

The first seven days of brooding are the most critical for properly heating and caring for broiler chicks. If chicks are chilled, they will not grow properly. If chicks are too warm, they may become dehydrated. Dehydration may lead to poor growth or death. Thus, it is important to begin operating the heat source at least 24 hours before the chicks arrive. In that 24-hour period, the heat source should be set to warm the brooding area from 90 to 95 °F as well as to heat the litter adequately. Use a thermometer to check the pen temperature. NOTE: Monitor the temperature at the floor level. After the first 7 days, reduce the brooding temperature gradually by 5 degrees every 5 days until the broilers are about 4 weeks old.

Electric heat lamps (infrared bulbs) or gas or electric hover-type brooders can be used for the heat source. The electric heat lamps are a good and popular source of heat. One 125-watt bulb is needed for each 25 chicks. Also, the heat lamp should be secured so that it cannot fall into the litter, and all electrical wiring needs to be adequate for the size of the bulb used.

When using a heat lamp, you can change the brooding temperature by adjusting the height of the lamp above the floor. The temperature should be monitored with a thermometer at chick level and by

observing the chicks' behavior. Cold chicks will huddle together under the heat source; hot chicks will move to the outer limits of the brooder guard and comfortable chicks will stay in a semicircle around the heat source.

Heat is very important and should be closely regulated. Have the litter 90 to 95 °F when the chicks arrive to the house and hold at that temperature for the first week. A set of chicks started properly will be a pound heavier than a set of chicks kept cool the first day if all else is equal. Always regulate with heat lamp by raising and lowering the lamp. 18" from the litter is a good spacing.

Temperature Chart

Age, days	Height of Heat Lamp, inches	Approximate Temperature, °F
0-7	18	90
8-14	21	80
15-21	24	75
22-show	27	68-70

*Use the heat lamp only if air temperature gets cold. Brooder heat is generally not needed after 28 days; however, do not let temperature go below 60 °F.

**Maintain proper ambient temperature according to bird size. 90 °F for the first week and drop the temperature each week according to the table above.

Lighting

Low level white light is good after the chicks are up and growing. Florescent lights are not recommended. One 40-watt bulb per 50 birds provides plenty of light and should be left on all the time.

Pre-arrival

Have your house ready at least 3 days before the chicks arrive.

Growing Schedule

Day one

Fresh feed – Producers Turkey Starter Crumble to build a frame that can carry more muscle.

Electrolytes – 1 teaspoon Ralco's Citra-Lite per gallon of water for the first 4 days.

4' to 5' circle of cardboard for a comfort ring to keep chicks contained, temperature regulated and near feed and water. Five feet is suitable for 75 birds. The shavings should be covered with cloth for the first 5 days to prevent the chick from eating the shavings or hulls. Feed in pie tins so the chicks can find the feed easily.

Day four

Stop electrolytes and remove the cloth from the shavings. Enlarge the brooder ring.

Day seven

Spread wing bands. Drop the temperature 10 degrees.

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Day twelve

Introduce Producers Turkey Starter Pellet. We believe birds will perform better on a pelleted feed.

Day fourteen

Drop the temperature 5 degrees to 75 degrees.

Day sixteen

Start changing chicks over to Producers Show Broiler Starter Pellet.

Allow chicks to have room to move in and out of the heat as needed.

Day seventeen to Day twenty

Cull chicks. This means take out the smaller chicks or those that are not growing properly. Cull 25 down to 15 or 50 down to 25 birds. Provide electrolytes in the water for this day only. If you have two pens raised together, it is better to separate into two groups. Removing excess chicks allows better growth and development, less social dominance, less heat, droppings, less smell and more space per chick.

Day twenty-one

Drop the temperature another 5 degrees and maintain a temperature range of 68 to 70 degrees from this point on.

Day twenty-four

Transition to Producers Show Broiler Finisher Pellet

Introduce grease to the ration for extra energy. One time per day using 2 oz per one quart of feed is plenty. Too much and the chicks will scour. This should be fed as a top dress sprinkled on top of the existing feed, not fed in separate pans.

Use saturated animal fat, not oil. Bacon, sausage, hamburger, or any grease derived from an animal source. Coconut oil works well too. Corn oil, or any fat that is liquid at room temperature, will help the chicks finish but they will be soft and flaccid to the touch. You do not need to add corn or corn gluten meal as it is in the ration in correct proportion. When you manipulate the feed you change the amino acid balance and the growth is not enhanced. Chickens do not do well with milk products.

Day twenty-eight

Cull again by confirmation down to 12 chicks per child. Provide electrolytes in the water for this day only.

Increase grease to 2 times per day.

Day thirty-two

Increase grease to 3 times per day.

Day thirty-five

The last seven days, continue to feed grease 3 times per day

Day forty

The last 48 hours, add electrolytes to the water to protect against stress at the show. Select the birds as late as possible. The less they are handled the better they hold together. Take 5 to the show so you have an alternate if needed.

Points to ponder and remember

Chicks respond to human interaction. The more trips made to the chicken house the better they will grow.

Keep 9 to 12 for each pen of three.

Dump the old feed each evening and start fresh. Save the old feed for your culls. Keep the waterer clean enough that you would drink out of it. That means change it at least twice daily.

A radio is a good stimulator. Play it all the time.

Do not use florescent lights.

Keep the temperature constant and comfortable. If they are too hot, they do not grow and too cold they huddle to stay warm and do not eat.

Set a schedule and stick to it. You are more organized and productive on a schedule and chicks grow better and are more productive when on a regular schedule.

Day 0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pick-up Chicks						
Shavings covered				Remove shavings cover		
90 degrees						
Water - 80 degrees	Water - 80 degrees	Water - 80 degrees	Water - 80 degrees	Water - 80 degrees		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Electrolytes						
80 Degrees						
Spread wingbands						
Remove the Broode				25% Turk Start Pellet	50% Turk Start Pellet	75% Turk Start Pellet
				75% Turk Start Crum	50% Turk Start Crum	25% Turk Start Crum
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
75 Degrees	Replace/clean shavi		Cull chickens			
			Electrolytes			
100% Turkey Start Pe		25% Broil Start Pelle	50% Broil Start Pelle	75% Broil Start Pelle	100% Broil Start Pell	
		75% Turk Start Pelle	50% Turk Start Pelle	25% Turk Start Pelle		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
70 Degrees			Introduce Grease (once/day)			
			25% Broil Finish Pel	50% Broil Finish Pel	75% Broil Finish Pel	100% Broil Finish Pe
			75% Broil Start Pel	50% Broil Start Pel	25% Broil Start Pel	
28	29	30	31	32	33	34
Cull chickens						
Electrolytes						

