

CARE OF BABY POULTRY

PREPARATIONS BEFORE THE BABY POULTRY ARRIVES:

- A. Have a clean, disinfected facility ready for the arrival of the babies, which is free of rodents and has been sprayed with an insecticide such as Sevin or Malathion. Iodine, Cresylic Acid or Quaternary Ammonia products are satisfactory disinfectants. Baby poultry may be started using a floor brooding plan or a wire floor brooder system.

1. Floor brooding plan

- a. A variety of products can be used for initial brooding to provide a draft free environment. Most commonly used is a 12 to 18 inch High, cardboard brooder ring formed around the brooding area. A circle five feet in diameter is needed for 50 chicks. Increase the size of the ring proportionately to the added number of chicks to be started. Other products that have been satisfactorily used include large cardboard boxes; stock tanks and children's plastic swimming pools.
- b. Cover the floor with an inch or two of rice hulls, shavings, ground corncobs or other semi-coarse, absorbent products that do not easily mat. **DO NOT USE CEDAR SHAVINGS**, cedar is toxic to chickens. The litter should be covered with burlap material, cheesecloth, paper towels or other non-slick material for the first three days. This will prevent the babies from eating the litter, reduce the possibility of the babies from becoming sprattle-legged and provide for easy access of feed sprinkled on top of the material.
- c. Provide an adequate size brooder or one 250-watt heat lamp with reflector for each 50 babies. It is never wise to depend on only one heat lamp, so for insurance, provide at least two heat lamps regardless of the number of babies. Red heat lamps are preferred as they provide ample light without providing excessive light that may lead to picking. The heat lamps should be hung about 18 inches above the top of the litter. Check to be sure that they heat.
- d. Have available feeder lids for the feed. A box cut down to have one-inch sides is suitable. For bantams and game birds, sides only one-half to three quarters inch are preferred.

2. Wire Floor Brooder System

- a. The wire floor should be made of wire material not larger than the size of one-half-inch hardware cloth. For bantams and game birds one-fourth inch square wire floor material is preferred.

- b. Provide an adequate floor space as specified by the brooder manufacturer. The manufacturer generally recommends only the number of chicks that may be started in the brooder. After about two weeks, more space will need to be provided if the maximum recommended number have been started.
- c. Check the brooder to be sure it is heating correctly.
- d. Most brooders have a small light to signal when the heater is on and also a light for the babies to see at night. If the brooder does not have a night-light, one needs to be provided, preferably a 15-watt red light.
- e. Have available feeder lids for the feed. A box cut down to have one-inch sides is suitable. For bantams and game birds, sides only one-half to three-quarters inch are preferred.
- f. Most brooders are provided with water troughs. It is wise; however to also provide extra water founts to start the babies. Generally the brooder water troughs provide too much water access for starting ducks, bantams and game birds.
- g. Cover the wire for the first day or so with a non-slick material such as burlap, cheesecloth or paper towel. Do not use newspaper, as it is too slick and the birds will slide resulting in sprattle-legged birds.

B. Purchase feed recommended for the baby poultry that you have purchased.

- 1. Do not purchase more feed than will be consumed within two or three weeks, as the feed will lose some of the nutritional value, become stale and lose its palatability.
- 2. Commercial chick starter containing about 20% protein is recommended for starting bantams and layer type baby chicks.
- 3. Chicks being raised for meat should be started on a high protein – high energy rations that will produce rapid growth.
- 4. Ducklings and goslings should be started on starter containing at least 20% protein that does not contain any arsenic medication.
- 5. Turkeys, guineas, game birds and peafowl should be started on turkey or game bird starter containing at least 28% protein.

WHEN THE BABY POULTRY ARRIVES:

- A. If the babies have been shipped by U. S. Parcel Post, examine them to be sure they arrived in good condition. If the shipment is an Insured shipment and the poultry arrived in poor condition have a postal employee examine the shipment. Postal regulations require that a postal employee certify shipment arrival condition when an Insurance Claim is being made.

- B. If the baby poultry arrived in poor condition or if there is any question regarding the shipment, immediately call Ideal Poultry and advise them of the problem or questions you have.
- C. Turn on your brooder or heat lamps and be sure that you have a warm area for the babies. Proper temperature at bird level under the brooder or heat lamp for the first week is 90 to 95 degrees. Reduce the temperature 5 degrees each week for the first five weeks. After that time the poultry will normally not require supplementary heat. Remember, baby poultry need to be provided with enough space so that they can move to the heat or away from the heat source according to their needs.
- D. Fill the water fountains with fresh clean water. To help boost the energy of the babies, add ½ cup of sugar to each gallon of initial water. Chicks start better if additional chemicals are not added to the water. Ideal does not recommend the use of Ren-O-Sal or Walko tablets.
- E. If fine grit is available mix grit in the ratio of 1 to 10 – grit to feed. Fill the feeder lids with a quarter inch of feed or feed and grit mixture and sprinkle a generous amount of feed or mixture on top of the non-slick material covering the litter.
- F. Live poultry can be a source of potentially harmful microorganisms; therefore, precautions must be taken when handling and caring for them, to prevent fecal/oral transmission among people. Adults must supervise children when they handle poultry to make sure that they do not put their hands or fingers into their mouth. Do not keep baby poultry or mature poultry in the family living space. Always wash your hands with soap and water after handling poultry.
- G. To help get the baby poultry off to a good start, remove one bird at a time from the shipping box, dip the bird's beak or bill into the prepared water and place the baby into a feeder lid in a warmed brood area.
- H. Turkeys are more difficult to start than other poultry. It is wise to start a few chicks with the baby poults. To help them get started, put shiny marbles in the water and fine grit in the feed to help them find the water and feed.
- I. Ducklings, especially Mallards, dehydrate much sooner than other baby poultry. To prevent over consumption of water which results in water logging and death, provide access to readily available water for about 15 minutes, remove the water for 10 or 15 minutes and then, allow them to have water again. Do this two or three times and the ducklings will adjust to proper water consumption. Limit the depth of water so the ducklings do not get wet and spill water on the litter.
- J. Watch the babies carefully for the first hour or so to be sure they are finding the water and beginning to eat. Observe their activity relative to the heat. Chicks will locate where they are most comfortable. If they are comfortable they will be

spread out in the available brooding area. If they are too cold, they will hover or crowd under the heat source. If they are too hot they will try to move away from the heat source and will pant in an effort to cool themselves. If there is a draft, they will crowd away from the draft.

- K. After two days of fresh water, five 3 days of vitamin and electrolytes in the water at the manufacturers recommended dosage level. This can be repeated for three days every other week. Ideal does not recommend the use of vitamins and electrolytes on a continuing basis or their use above manufacturers recommendations. The proper use of vitamins and electrolytes in the water will help prevent leg weakness in broilers and turkeys.
- L. Keeping the brooding area dry is essential. Removal of wet or caked litter is necessary for proper health of the flock. Proper ventilation, providing as much fresh air as possible will help in keeping the litter dry and reduce the concentration of ammonia.
- M. Ideal does not recommend the addition of medications to the water or feed for the sake of giving the birds medication. Sulfa drugs used indiscriminately can lead to kidney damage. Overuse of antibiotics can lead to vitamins being chemically tied up and the antibiotics become ineffective if needed for a specific treatment.