

CARE OF BABY POULTRY

H&H Poultry - April Howington



Chicks, 90 degrees for the first week,

decrease by 5 degrees each week thereafter.

Have the brooder area ready prior to bringing your birds home or hatching them. If

hatching your own, leave chicks in incubator

until they are dry and fluffed out. You may use a large, heavy cardboard box and metal drop light with a 100 watt bulb if you are using a small brooder box, or a 250 watt red bulb if your brooder space is large enough for them to move away from the heat adequately. The 250 watt will need to be, of course, farther away from the sleeping area to prevent the chicks from getting too hot. To decrease the temperature week by week, simply change the bulb wattage: 100, 75, 60, 40, 25, 15, 7 respectively.

Downsizing the wattage each week will wean them off of the heat and the light. Most people leave the heat too high for too long. Watch your chicks closely. If they huddle they are cold, if they scatter out they are hot. Do not cover the top of the box with anything because it can cause suffocation in a hurry. Line the bottom of the box with pine shavings, place a thick layer of white paper towels over the shavings to give the chicks better traction. (Do not use Cedar shavings, as they can give off gases that may harm the poultry.) If newspaper is used it can cause slipping and leg problems, called spraddled legs. Take the paper towels off of the shavings after the 2nd or 3rd day, when you are sure they are eating good, otherwise they may eat the shavings instead of their food. Shavings are great to keep the floor dry and the odor down. As soon as their wings are feathered out they will be able to withstand temperatures at night to about 60 or 70 degrees. Feed chick starter 'til they are 6-8 weeks old then switch to layer feed. There is really no need to feed a finisher or grower. The only difference in most starters and layers is the amount of calcium. Don't feed scratch until they are several weeks old and then only as a treat. We start our poultry on a starter that has millet and small seeds in it. White millet is small and more digestible than scratch. Be sure they have access to coarse sand or baby chick grit. Scratch is high in starch and low in protein and is not intended to be used as a complete feed for confined birds, whether they are chicks or adults. Use warm tap water mixed with 1 TBS of sugar to 1 quart of water. Dip the beak of each bird in the warm sugar water as soon as you get them home and watch the chick's throat to see that it swallows. Put food and water close for 1st day to insure they find it. Starter can be scattered out over the white paper towels to help them find their first meal a little better. At 3 days please sprinkle

a little course sand on their starter for grit to help grind the tiny bits of corn and other grains that are in the crumbles.

Guinea Keet, Peafowl and Turkey Poults, same as above only they need to be fed a 28% turkey starter or 28% gamebird crumble till they are 6-8 weeks old then switch to a regular chicken layer feed, as they grow faster and are more satisfied on the higher protein feed. It is really best not to raise them together if possible. Guinea, peafowl and turkeys can all be raised together with no problems. (Note: turkey starter is medicated and gamebird is not.)

Ducklings and Goslings, 85 degrees and decrease by 5 degrees each week. They tolerate the cold very well and can have their heat discontinued after about 3 or 4 weeks especially if the weather is nice. Ducklings and goslings are forever playing in their drinking water. Do not give them swimming water until they are 4 or 5 weeks old because they don't have a mother to stimulate their oil glands and they may drown in water that is too deep. Shallow water of about 3 or 4 inches can be given at any time, if the weather is warm. Make certain that they can climb out of the container or they will water log, chill and die. Splashing around in shallow water will help stimulate them to oil their own glands and is great fun for them! Feed ducklings a 28% protein gamebird crumble rather than chick starter because they grow faster on it and need the higher protein. Ducklings are not supposed to be fed a crumble with medications in it. Ducklings can choke on their food if they don't have water to wash it down. We switch them to a 20% protein layer pellet at about 4-5 weeks old as choking is less likely on a pellet. Be sure that they never run out of fresh drinking water, and the drinker should be large enough for them to dip their entire bill in the water to wash their eyes and nostrils out. Eye infections are common in ducks that don't have deep enough water dishes.

Caution: Do not raise ducklings or goslings with chicks, guineas, peafowl or turkeys in the same brooder because the ducks are very messy with water and can cause the chicks, guineas, peafowl and/or turkeys to get wet, chill and die.

Note: **Scratch grains are not intended to be the sole source of food** intake for any type of confined poultry. It is not a complete feed and is very high in carbohydrate. Feeding excessive amounts of scratch grains with complete feeds will lower the overall protein content of intake. Scratch grains can mold easily too. If it smells fermented, please throw it out and buy a new sack. Scratch grains should only be used as a treat and then only sparingly. Additionally, at about 6-8 weeks of age you should add grit to all poultry's diet. Grit aids in the grinding up of the grains and pellets in the gizzard. For all baby poultry, please sprinkle their starter with a little course sand. This will help them grind their starter as there are bits of grain in all

starters! Not too much, just a little sprinkle.

General Problems with Confined Poultry: Feather picking and toe picking can become a problem with any poultry. Chickens are worse than guineas, peafowl, turkeys and ducklings. The problem can be caused by any one of the following things; lack of animal protein in the diet, too much heat, too much light, not enough fresh air, not enough feed, imbalanced feed, moldy feed, air too cold or drafty, overcrowded conditions or just plain boredom. Usually it is lack of animal protein, overcrowding, heat that is too high for too long or bright light that cause pecking. Some breeds are worse than others. Watch for signs such as red, swollen toes or feathers and fur missing from back of chick or around vent area. Remove the battered chick and isolate it or you may put him with one other non-picker chick for company. Often times using a red bulb will cut down on feather picking because they can't see as well under the red lights. Try a few different things to see if it stops. For boredom you may want to change their litter more often or add sand or a little white millet to give them something else to pick at. Alfalfa hay is a good deterrent also and the leafy greens in the hay are good for them. Don't forget to add the sand or chick grit. Toe picking, to me, is the most damaging because they actually pick another bird's toe until it is maimed and the bird can become crippled so watch carefully for this. For toe picking it may be helpful to add hay or straw to their litter to camouflage the toes. Treat the wounded chicks with the thick baby Desitin ointment or pine tar. This will deter other chicks from pecking for a day or two as they begin to heal. Make sure you reapply it often until they are healed. As guineas mature, the males often times will vie for dominance. They will fight tirelessly and can be very cruel to each other. Rarely do they kill each other, but sometime it is necessary to remove the aggressive male.

Please feel free to email me if you have a question at handhpoultry@aol.com