

# Chick Care Sheet

Welcome to the world of backyard chickens! We want your chicks to have the best possible care, so we prepared this sheet to cover the essentials.

## What you need:

- Chick starter feed - this will be their main food.
- Feeder
- Waterer
- Heat source - usually a reflector and bulb. Brinsea Eco-glow also works
- Newspaper and paper towels
- Shavings for bedding
- Brooder container
- Chicks !!

## Optional:

- Electrolytes and probiotics
- Treats (age appropriate)

## Instructions:

1. Keep the chicks warm while you prepare their new home (or better yet, prepare before you pick up the chicks)
2. Use a large container with sides at least 12" high for the brooder. Storage totes work well for this, but you can also use cardboard boxes or aquariums
3. For the first week, you have the option of using newspaper or wood shavings.
  - Newspaper - cover the bottom of the brooder with several layers of newspaper, then a layer of paper towels (for traction, plain newspaper is too smooth)
  - Shavings - Add enough shavings to cover the bottom, about ½ an inch is fine. If the chicks are less than 4 days old, it is helpful to cover the shaving with paper towels, so you can put food down for them to eat. After about 4 days they should have no problems eating out of a feeder.
4. Fill the feed and water containers and put them toward one side of the brooder.
5. Put the heat source at the far side. A plastic pipe or board placed across the top of the brooder makes a good hanger. Keep the bulb higher than the chicks can reach.
6. Put the chicks directly under the heat source
7. Observe them frequently. They should find the food and water in their own. If you are concerned, you can gently dip their beaks into the water
8. Adjust the temperature by raising or lowering the light. Chicks find their own temperature preference, especially for sleeping. When they are asleep, they should be near or under the edge of the reflector. Raise the light if they sleep away from it and lower it if they huddle directly underneath. You can also change bulbs to change the amount of heat.

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## Rules:

- Some noise is normal, but very loud and incessant chirping means they need something - probably food, water or heat. You will quickly learn their normal sounds. Turkey poults may whistle for no reason other than that they miss you.
- Chicks may carry bacteria that humans are not used to (and vice versa). Please remember to wash your hands before and after caring for them. Children may need help with this
- They are quite hardy overall, but very vulnerable to injury from other animals, even ones that are not trying to hurt them. By far the greatest cause of death with chickens of every age is predation, and it is also the most preventable
- Keep alert for “pasty butt”. This is when the feces form a plug and it can kill a chick. Soak the area with warm water until you can work it loose and remove the plug. Adding 1 tablespoon of apple cider vinegar per quart of water may help this condition.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Should I use medicated chick starter?**  
The medication added to starter is not an antibiotic, so it does not cause resistance issues, but it is unnecessary if you are providing good care and keeping the bedding dry
- **How long should they get starter feed?**  
They can stay on starter until the first ones start to lay, or you can switch them to grower after about 6 weeks
- **Do they need filtered or warmed water?**  
No, if the water is safe for people, it will work for chicks. Some commercial operations add chlorine to the drinking water, so chlorinated water is ok. It can be any temp, they will not get chilled drinking cold water. They really like clean over dirty water and can taste the difference
- **What treats can I give my chicks?**  
BabyCake is specially formulated as a treat for chicks. You can also offer finely chopped greens or other table scraps. Some foods they will not like, and there are no rules about what they like. As a rule, if it is healthy for people, it is healthy for chickens. Finely chopped eggs (scrambled or hard boiled) are very good for them, as are most fruits and vegetables (fresh or cooked), just be aware of the size pieces that they are capable of swallowing, since they cannot chew their food.
- **How much can they be handled safely?**  
They are very social and in frequent physical contact with other chicks. People handling them is well accepted also, and essential if you want a very tame adult chicken. It would be hard to handle them too much. They need time to eat, drink and sleep of course, but could spend hours every day being held. It is also ok to take them outdoors and let them play in the grass, with supervision to protect them and ensure they don't get stressed.  
*\*\*\* Always remember to wash your hands before and after to protect you and the chicks \*\*\**
- **What can I do to reduce the odor?**  
Change the bedding more frequently. Adding Sweet PDZ Stall Freshener to the bedding will help control odors between changes. If that's not enough, maybe it is time for them to move outside.
- **When can they go outside?**  
If you can provide enough heat in a sheltered building, they can go outside from the start. Once they are fully feathered that can stand temperature extremes much better, but you would still want to adjust them gradually to extreme cold.

## How to get help:

- Email the breeder [4chicky@mail.com](mailto:4chicky@mail.com)
- Look online, a great resource is [backyardchickens.com](http://backyardchickens.com)