



Caring for your 'Day-Old' Chicks

The four most important things in the first 60 days are:

- Clean Water and Food
- Adequate Warmth/Heating
- Good Hygiene
- Safe Dry Housing

WATER AND FOOD:

Chicks drink **a lot** of water so they need to have clean fresh cool water all the time. Make sure their water source isn't too close to their heat source. Check that the chicks don't scratch too many shavings into the drinker making the water undrinkable. Clean their drinker regularly, with hot soapy water. Rinse well before refilling with clean cool water.

We recommend **Westons Chick Crumble** for at least the first 6 – 8 weeks of their life. Don't feed them any vegetables/greens yet as it will give them diarrhoea and regular laying pellets are too big for them to digest properly. Make sure food is always available and that the container is kept clean from shavings and chick droppings. Clean when container is soiled, with hot soapy water, rinse and dry well then fill with fresh feed.

**Note: MEDICATED STARTER FOOD IS NOT FOR DOGS AND CAN MAKE THEM VERY ILL.
KEEP FOOD (AND THE WASTE FROM YOUR CHICK BOX) SAFE FROM DOGS.**

Do not feed your young chicks any Adult Food/Layer Pellets. When they are 6-8 weeks old you can change them to Grower Pellets and start giving them some greens such as Spinach or Silverbeet. Contact us for "Grower Pellets" or leave them on the Chick Crumble. At 18 weeks old you can start to introduce them to Layer Pellets.

*The higher quality feed they receive when they are when growing,
the longer they will lay eggs for you when they are adult hens.*

WARMTH & HEATING:

Chicks cannot regulate their own body heat until they are approximately 3-4 weeks old.

You can use a heat lamp or heat pad to help them – and by raising and lowering the lamp you give them access to more or less heat. Heat Pads such as the **Comfort Chick range** are an excellent way of providing safe heat without the use of a light.

- If your chicks huddle directly under the lamp / heat pad all day, they may be too cold.
- If they are always far away from the lamp / heat pad, it is too close and therefore too hot.
- The ideal level of heating/warmth is when they are happily wandering throughout their box, some under the heating source, others out feeding and drinking

*We do not recommend the use of a common lightbulb for heating.
Constant bright light / illumination is not good for your chicks well-being.
They need restful sleep, just like you.*



HYGIENE:

Make sure the bedding shavings are dry - especially around the water drinker. Discard any wet shavings and replace with dry as wet shavings will grow bacteria and start to smell. Remove large areas of soiled shavings and replace with fresh dry untreated shavings.

Don't forget to wash your own hands before and after handling your chicks, soiled shavings, or their food.

HOUSING:

A sturdy box, with room for a drinker and a feeder and without cramping your chickens, is a good house. They will grow fast and within weeks will be able to flutter their wings. Make sure they can't get out and that also other pets cannot get in unsupervised!

You can add some lavender or rosemary sprigs to the shavings to keep it sweet smelling. Untreated wood shavings are best at keeping the chick box dry and clean.

SIGNS OF ILLNESS / SICK CHICKS:

Unwell chicks will fluff up, not move around much or peep continuously.

Dirty bottoms can be a sign of being too hot, on the wrong diet or sometimes an infection. Check for all these things. Clean your chick's bottom by rinsing around their vent gently with tepid water. Sometimes the chicks vent can become blocked by dried droppings but be careful not to damage the area as you clean.

If your chick looks unwell **and** has bloody droppings **and** droopy wings, it probably has an infection called **coccidiosis** and you need to treat for this quickly with '**Coxiprol**' or 'Baycox' medicines.

Infections are unlikely to happen if you follow the steps above and keep your chick, its box and shavings clean and dry, and their food and drink containers clean and feed them with a recommended medicated Chick Starter Feed. *Westons Chick Crumble and Sharpes Starter Crumble* contains a coccidiostat (medicine) which minimises the chance of infections happening.

SOCIALISING:

Gently handling and talking to your chicks regularly will mean that they will quickly become friendly and quite excellent pets - as well as confident egg layers!

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about your chickens health!

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