

Starting Materials

- Chick-appropriate feeder & water- Not hen feeders or waters!
- Heat lamp with red bulb
- Thermometer
- Medicated chick starter feed
- Pine or cedar shavings
- Clean, warm, dry box, hutch, cage or coop

Where to start chicks (the brooder)

- Laundry room
- Barn or garage
- Isolated spot in chicken coop
- Under a broody hen (separated from the flock)

Location Set up

- Make their home easy to clean and clean often!
- Chicks need ample, clean water. Use the heat lamp to keep water from freezing.
- Chicks also need a place to cool off and get away from the heat light.

Temperature

Chicks are very sensitive to cold! Their home needs to mimic the hen's warm underside.

- Secure heat lamp very well so it can't fall down and start a fire.
- Start heat lamp close to the ground (12-18 inches) but high enough the chicks can't touch it.
- Chicks should be kept really warm to start and then you can decrease the temperature by raising up the heat lamp.

Week 1: 90-95 F

Week 2: 85-90 F

Week 3: 80-85 F

Week 4: 75-80 F

Week 5: 70-75 F

Week 6: 70 F

- Put the thermometer right under the heat lamp and check it twice/day. Move heat lamp up or down to get the right temperature or add insulation or cover to keep the temperature right.
- Observe your chicks! If they huddle together under the heat lamp, they are too cold. If they scatter away from the heat lamp and avoid the area directly under it, they are too warm. If they are evenly and randomly spread throughout the brooder, they are just right.

Other Considerations

- Chicks should be kept separate from older hens until they are the same size. Hens will kill chicks!
- Chicks are very susceptible to disease.
 - I recommend medicated chick starter.
 - If they have lots of dung on their butt, clean it off! This helps keep disease from spreading or getting worse. The same goes for hens.
- Chicks can spread disease! Wash your hands after handling chicks and do not kiss them!
- Chicks often drown! Don't let them near open water or waters.

Where to buy chicks

- Small numbers can be purchased at feed stores like D&B
 - If you buy them late, you get a good deal
- Order specific breeds at Oregon Trail Feed (by D&B)
- I like Murray McMurray Hatchery. Minimum order is 25. They come through the post office.
- Consider buying more chicks than you need and splitting them with a friend.

Kinds of Chicks

- Sexed- The chicks will be hens (no roosters)
- Straight run- The chicks are not sexed. You will get some roosters.
- Broilers- Meat chickens
- Layers- Egg chickens
- Buying “assorted” chicks and “straight run” is cheaper when ordering.
- It is ok to raise broilers and layers together, but make sure you can tell them apart (get distinctive colors.) Some people prefer to separate pullets (teenage chickens) so they can feed broilers heavier food and promote meat production.
- Breed considerations
 - What color egg do you want?
 - What kind of meat bird do you want? Red Rangers are less meaty, but more natural. Cornish are bred for quick, mass production and are kinda sad at the end of life (can't walk.)
 - Consider buying breeds that are good mothers. You can search Murray McMurray for “likely to sit on eggs”

More resources

Check out the Murray McMurray website and blog for excellent chick raising information.