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Care and Feeding of Chicks

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The care of newly hatched chicks is without doubt the most exacting task of the poultryman. Babyhood is the most delicate period of the chick's life. This applies with double force when chicks are reared without the aid of a hen mother.

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Care and Feeding of Chicks

The business of taking care of newly hatched chicks is not an easy one. Especially is this true if the chicks are incubator hatched and without a hen mother to look after them, says A. C. Smith, University Farm, St. Paul.

The baby chick must be kept comfortable, it must have clean quarters, and it must be fed with great care.

Incubator chicks should be left in the incubator for 24 hours.

Feeding begins on second day

The second day, removed from the incubator and provided with ample brooding space, kept comfortably warm, chicks should be fed six times, one-half ounce or a small handful of one or another of the following feeds for each fifty chicks:

Steel-cut oatmeal, or

Commercial chick starter, or

Cracker crumbs or stale dry bread crumbs

The third day the chicks should be fed as on the second day with the addition of one feeding of green stuff—a lettuce leaf or short grass on sod. This green stuff should not be cut into small pieces but the chicks should be allowed to pick it. Thereafter green feeds should be continued until the birds are placed on range.

The fourth day the amount fed is increased to two ounces for each fifty birds at each feeding, the feed being scattered on a light litter of cut straw, straw chaff, or hay chaff, on a dry floor.

Wheat bran is added to ration

From the fifth day on to two weeks, the feeding continues as on the fourth day, with the exception that the noonday feed is omitted and wheat bran is fed on clean boards. On this bran the chicks are allowed to feed for about six minutes, after which the remaining bran is removed. When **strictly pure** wheat bran is not to be had, a good commercial chick mash may be used.

In addition, the chicks should have, for the first ten days, all the whole milk they will take in from fifteen to twenty minutes. After ten days, skimmilk, sweet milk, sour milk, or buttermilk should be given. If milk is not available, however, 30 per cent of meat scrap should be added to the bran or mash. Poultrymen should feed either all sweet milk or all sour milk; they should not change from one to the other.

The feathering period

In the feathering period, from the third to the eighth week, mash is fed from a hopper, in one of the following forms:

Prepared chick mash, or

Pure wheat bran and 30 per cent beef-scrap or milk, or

Equal parts by weight of cornmeal, wheat middlings, wheat bran, and fine oatmeal, and 30 per cent of good grade meat scrap; one half this amount of beef scrap if milk is provided.

In addition to the mash, the birds should be fed a mixture of equal parts of finely cracked corn, wheat, and hulled oats twice a day, or else a commercial chick feed—all they will clean up in 20 or 30 minutes.

Range Period Begins

The range period begins at the end of the eighth week, but there is danger of getting the chicks out too early unless they are very well protected.

Attention is needed but it pays

For feed during this period, the birds should have the third mixture or mash listed among the feeds for the feathering period. They should also have 1 pound of salt for every 100 pounds of feed. Finely ground oats may be used in place of the oatmeal in this ration.

If the chicks are started right returns will be greatly increased.

For further information, consult your county agent or write to the Extension Division, University Farm, St. Paul.