



# CHICKENS

## Preparing Your Chicken for Calf Club Day.

You are going to take home a baby chicken that is less than one week old (from school it is only one day old). It is covered with fluffy down. Very quickly you will see your chicken grow and change, if you feed it regularly and look after it carefully. They will arrive at school on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July.

The notes here have been prepared to help you look after your chicken.



### **ADOPT A CHICKEN**

1. Have each child adopt their chicken after receiving it.
2. Children should name their chickens,
3. The chicken should be allowed to spend time with its adopted parents each day.
4. Each child is to put his/her chicken down on the floor and allow it to run around and investigate as follows -

- \* Does it stay near you?
- \* Walk away from it and call it.
- \* Does it follow?
- \* Take your chicken for a walk outside.
- \* Protect your chicken as a mother would.
- \* What does the chicken do outside?



*Emphasise the importance of children washing their hands after handling their chickens because it is important to wash after handling any pet.*

**IMPRINTING** - newly hatched chickens tend to follow the first large moving object they see after hatching. In the natural situation, the big moving thing would be the mother hen, but young chicks will imprint on almost anything, colour and shape do not appear to matter. The chickens form a lasting attachment for this object (or person.)

Imprinting should be carried out in the first day of the chicken hatching. It works best if carried out between 6 and 18 hours and if the object (person) makes a sound while moving away from the chicken.

The sensitive period for imprinting is over in about 36 hours. So it is important for your child to do this the night the chickens arrive at your home. After this the chicken cannot be imprinted.

### **How to Make a Brooder**

Until your chicken is about 4 weeks old, it has to be kept warm in a brooder. For the first week after you take it home, the light should be kept on at night and if it is cold, during the day too. If the weather continues to be cold, the light should be left on until the chicken has its feathers. It is also beneficial to have more than one chicken for warmth and company.

#### **To make a brooder you will need -**

- \* A carton or polystyrene box about 30 cm x 24 cm x 24 cm high. This can be enlarged to a bigger box as the chickens grow.
- \* A light bulb with a flex and plug (an old bedroom lamp is ideal) with a 60 or 40 watt bulb, and later a 25 watt.

The brooder should contain:

- a water container, not too big as the chicken could drown.
- a food container. This could be a dish or jar lid. Use plastic or tin.

### **Cleaning the brooder**

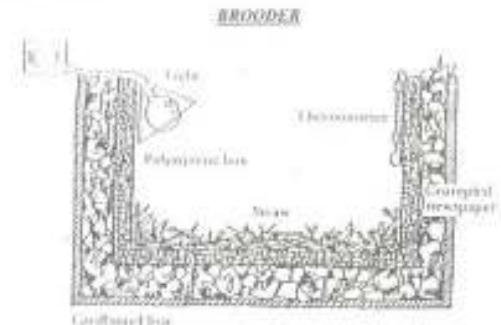
A layer of wood shavings, or dry sand can be used and changed every two days. However you can use newspaper instead but this most likely will need to be changed morning and evening.

**Remember to wash your hands after cleaning the chicken's brooder.**

### **BROODER**

#### **SETTING UP A BROODER**

One idea for a brooder is set out.  
Discuss the plan with the children.  
Consider the parts of the brooder.  
Why are they needed



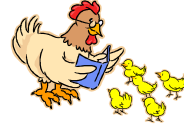
### **WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR CHICKEN**

**Make sure it has food and water available all the time.**

1. Chicken crumbs are designed to be a complete food for chickens. If you have not got these, the chickens may be started on coarse oatmeal or rolled oats, even a hard boiled egg chopped finely will be alright. This crumble or crumbs can be obtained from the store or pet shop or a farm agent. Introduce chopped grass after a week.
2. Handle it **carefully**. It can be killed with rough handling. Make sure you don't drop it.
3. Keep the brooder, and later the cage **clean**.
4. If the weather is warm, take your chicken outside on the grass for half an hour (longer as the chicken grows). You can make a pen to protect it from cats or dogs or have a cage that it will use later when it is bigger



5. Observe your chicken
  - How does it eat?
  - How does it drink?
  - How does it behave outside on the grass?
  - Listen to the different sounds it makes.
  - What are its eyes like?
  - What are its feet like?
  - What happens to the yellow down?
  - What colour are the feathers?
  - What do the new feathers feel like?
  - What grows on its head?



6. Draw your chicken showing the changes in your Diary.
7. **All children must complete a diary which shows their chicken growing, how they cared for it, what they fed it etc, etc and must also include some photos. The diary can either be done in a normal exercise book or clearfile.**
8. Weigh and measure your chicken each week and keep a record in your diary of all your findings.

The light provides heat for the chickens. They will come close to it when they are cool and move away when they are hot. If they huddle near the light you may need to add a second one for added warmth or increase the wattage of the bulb or increase the insulation of the box.

Both the crumpled newspaper and the external box provide insulation so that the temperature inside the brooder does not fluctuate with the outside temperature.

The straw or hay also provides extra warmth for the chicks and allows for easy cleaning of the brooder.

A thermometer could be used to check that the temperature is correct and stable.  
At 33 degrees C to start with reducing to 15 degrees C.

#### **REARING INSTRUCTIONS FOR DAY OLD BACKYARD CHICKENS FROM BROMLEY PARK**

##### **ON RECEIPT**

See that the chickens are warm as this is their first need – chicks will not start to feed if they are cold. Brooding temperatures should be 33°C for the first week and reduced weekly until down to about 15°C. They can be kept in a hot water cupboard for the first couple of nights until other arrangements are made, or they could be placed under a broody hen, but this must be done at night to ensure that the hen becomes familiar with them.

A 40 to 60 watt bulb suspended over a suitable box and about 300mm above the chicks will provide a suitable temperature or we can supply midget brooders on request that will accommodate up to 30 chicks with temperature, feed and water facilities.

##### **FEED AND WATER**

Access to clear water in a suitable receptacle so that the chicks do not get wet. They will then be in a condition to start feeding.

The most suitable feed are chick rearing crumbles, which contain the correct vitamins, or fine chick grain. These are obtainable from feed merchants and most stock and station agents.

If you have not got these, the chicks may be started on coarse oatmeal or rolled oats, even a hard boiled egg chopped finely will assist.

##### **GENERAL**

See that all facilities are kept strictly clean at all times. As chicks grow, quarters must be enlarged. For any further instructions please contact our sales staff.

Ph: Tuakau 2368-011.

##### **JUDGING**

\* Chickens are judged in four sections:

1. Child/Chicken relationship – this is how your child relates to its chicken
2. Rearing – the health and looks of your chicken
3. Calling – you will be asked to call your chicken to you
4. Diary – children must complete a diary about raising their chicken. This must be of high standard and include everything the child does with their chicken! ***Diaries must be handed in by Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October to be eligible to win trophies.***
5. For new students, examples can be viewed at the office.



##### **Suggestions for Training**

1. Initially, train your chicken to come to you for food, when called.
2. Continue to practise calling your chicken without food, as you will not be allowed to encourage your chicken with food at Calf Club.
3. Your chicken should come straight to you when called and you should not have to grab or chase it.

***NOTE: ALL children having Chickens must complete a written diary on how you raised, fed & looked after your chicken etc including photos. These must be completed and handed in on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October, last Monday of Term 3 for judging so it can be back by Thursday for Calf Club display. Some copies of last year's diaries can be viewed at the library to give you some ideas. Diaries must be of a high quality and are worth points which go toward the overall chicken winner. Diaries can be done in a clearfile or just a standard exercise book.***