

A simple brooding unit may be used to keep a few chicks for a short time. The principles of brooding are the same regardless of the number of chicks in the flock. Whether there are 2 chicks in the brooding unit or 2,000, they need to be kept warm, well fed, and watered; protected from predators and dampness; and provided with plenty of fresh air without being exposed to drafts. The unit described here, when used in a warm place such as a schoolroom or at home, will do the job.

The shape of the brooder box is not important as long as it is large enough to house the chicks adequately and contains the equipment (water fountain, food, and litter material) to care for the chicks. A gooseneck lamp next to the box can provide heat.

Chicks must be able to get away from direct heat, so having the lamp at one end with a slightly cooler area at the other end of the box is advisable. If the side of the box is very high, a slot can be made so that the base of the lamp can be placed outside while the gooseneck fits through the slot and the shade and bulb are inside the box. Be sure that such an arrangement does not make the heat in the box too intense for the comfort of the chicks.

A 60- to 75-watt bulb will normally provide enough warmth. The neck of the lamp can be bent to move the bulb closer to the chicks, if they appear cold, or farther away if the chicks seem to be too warm. Comfortable chicks are usually distributed evenly throughout the floor area of the brooding unit.

Each brooder unit should contain at least one waterer and one feeder. Place the waterer on a wooden block or stand to help keep the litter dry. Chicks should be able to dip only their beaks into the water dish, so place pebbles, marbles, or a screen in the dish. Wet chicks are much more susceptible to drafts and disease. Chick starter with about 20 percent protein can be obtained from a feed

dealer. As a temporary measure, two parts of dry dog food can be mixed with one part of dry cereal. Both should be crushed so that the particles are no bigger than one-eighth inch. Feed and water the chicks as soon as they are moved from the incubator to the brooder.

The litter in the brooder serves as insulation and as an absorptive material. Peat moss, wood shavings, sawdust, straw, or sand can be used. Never place young birds on a smooth surface, because they cannot grip a slippery surface. Their toes curl, and their legs spread out to the side. This may result in permanent leg damage.

The walls of the brooder serve as a chick guard and keep drafts off the chicks. After the chicks have been put into the brooding unit, cover it with a welded-wire screen. This will keep the chicks in and predators, such as cats, out. A mesh that is too large will still allow chicks to slip through or a cat to reach in. Half-inch welded wire or hardware cloth is probably the most satisfactory size to use.

All domestic animals depend on human beings for survival. Make sure the chicks are properly housed, have food and water, and are kept warm and out of drafts. This means checking the brooder morning, noon, and night (just before going to bed).

Ideal temperature.

#### Age of Chicks Temperature

- 1 day to 1 week 95
- 1 week to 2 weeks 90
- 2 weeks to 3 weeks 85
- 3 weeks to 3 weeks 80
- 4 weeks to 5 weeks 75

Equipment and Supplies for Brooding 12 Chicks

Cardboard box approximately 28" x 25" x 14". Each chick should have about 36 square inches of space, though slightly less room per chick is acceptable for a short while. A wooden box is preferable to cardboard if other animals are around. A wooden box does not tip over as easily and is more difficult to chew. Cover the box with welded wire (1/4" to 1/2" mesh) to protect the chicks from other animals.

Gooseneck lamp with a 60- to 75-watt bulb to keep the chicks warm.

Shavings, straw, shredded paper, or other appropriate litter material.

Feed tray for chicken starter feed.

Waterer.

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