

# RAISING CHICKENS

Your Chick will need:

- Chick starter feed and container
- water dish, (not too deep)
- lamp or hanging light bulb over a box or fish bin lined with newspaper.

A larger area is needed as the chicks grow, (rabbit/guinea pig hutch is a good alternative) leading to chook house and run. They will of course reward you with eggs around 5 months of age.

**Housing:** You will have to provide a dry and draught free area, which can be cleaned easily. For the first few weeks you will have to keep them indoors in an old cardboard box or fish-bin. By using newspaper as a floor or a cardboard box, you can simply throw it out and replace it with clean sheets of paper or a fresh box.

They will need a lamp for warmth. Make sure it is secure and cannot burn the chicks or start a fire. How long you keep them under the lamp will depend on how many chicks you have and what the weather is doing.

They will need access to fresh chick starter feed and clean water throughout the day.

As the chicks grow they will enjoy being put outside on nice days to have a scratch around. Be sure that they are safe from predators (including pet cats and dogs). As they get bigger you can leave them in a sheltered place during the day, such as a rabbit/guinea pig run with a house for shade and warmth, bringing them in at night. By about 8 weeks of age the chicks should be able to stay outside in a run with a draught free house. Once they are outside overnight don't bring them back in. By Agricultural Day they should be in a run with a chook house.

If you are putting them into an existing chicken run with other older chooks never add a single bird. One bird will be picked on by the others and possibly killed. It is better to add a number of new birds together. Or put them in a smaller cage within the chicken coop over night to let them get used to each other. Birds establish a "pecking order". Older birds usually dominate younger birds. But the hierarchy is normally from strongest to the weakest. This usually sorts itself out fairly quickly with no need for you to worry over petty squabbles.

**Feeding:** Feeding should be little but frequent. In the first few weeks, feed your chick starter pellets or mash. After about 4 weeks you can add pellets and wheat to their diet and feed them 3 - 4 times a day. Put a large rock in the water container so it can't be tipped over and also so the chick can't fall in and drown.

Ag Day Judging: On Ag day the chicks and students will be judged on the following categories:

- **Most Obvious Pet Chicken-** The friendliest and easily handled. This can be accomplished by handling the bird as much as possible. A chicken will happily sit on your lap for long periods.
- **Rearing and Grooming** – how well the chicken is presented (plumage, free of lice, healthy comb) and the student's general knowledge about rearing their chicken.

This information has been compiled from reliable sources; however, we recommend that you seek expert advice about any aspect of chicken rearing you are not familiar with. Falloons, Farmlands, RD1 and your local Vet are good sources for information. [www.chooks.co.nz](http://www.chooks.co.nz) is a helpful website.

