

Dear families,

Congrats on taking on the care of these fluffy friends for two weeks! If you are enjoying your time with them, feel free to check in with us about keeping them longer. Here's a checklist of what you should find in your kit, along with some instructions.

- Brooder tub
- Heat lamp
- Thermometer
- Newspaper
- Shavings
- Waterer
- Feeder
- Grain
- Wood blocks to raise feed and water out of shavings

Your daily chick or duckling chores

1. Observe. Does the temperature seem right? How do they look? You will get to know the lazy ones and the active ones fairly quickly. Does the bedding look good? Not too wet or dirty?
2. Water.
3. Feed.
4. Enjoy!

The details

The needs of baby chicks and ducklings are pretty basic, and as animals go, they are relatively easy to care for.

Temperature

Their biggest need is for a fairly consistent warm temperature. To keep things simple for you, choose a spot with a fairly consistent temperature. Avoid places with large swings like sunny areas where they might overheat at midday but be chilled at night. The target range is 85-95 degrees for the first two weeks, then a decrease of 5 degrees or so each week following. This is a basic guideline, it's more important to observe them and adjust based on their cues. Cold chicks/ducklings huddle together under the heat lamp. Hot chicks/ducklings move to the perimeters as far as they can get from the lamp. Cozy chicks/ducklings are evenly dispersed.

Air

Depending on the temperature in the space you have chosen, you may need to cover the lid and upper third of the brooder with a blanket or towel to keep the temperature up. There are holes drilled along a side of the tub to ensure good air flow. Take care that these don't get covered or blocked.

Water

We rinse and refresh their water feeder daily. We also keep it up on a block to make it harder for them to kick shavings into it. The waterers can be tricky. It is important that they either be perfectly level, or tipped slightly with the outlet on the downslope side. When filling the waterer, take care to screw the base on securely. It is easy to cross thread it which will cause it to drain into the bedding. It's a good idea to watch it for a moment after setting it in the tub to be sure that water doesn't drip out over the lip.

Feed

We make sure feed is topped up and they can eat whenever they are hungry. It can also help to keep feed up out of the shavings. Typically it's best to wait until they are 4 weeks old before feeding them treats or other food scraps. When they are old enough, you can experiment with feeding them your food scraps. In general, avoid lots of raw onions, citrus, and poultry meat. If they haven't touched the scraps after a couple of hours, compost them.

Bedding

Bedding can generally be built up as it becomes soiled, and doesn't need a daily full change. The exception to this is when water spills into it, and they don't have dry areas in which to nap.

Handling

Chicks and ducklings are more resilient than they look and we do expect you to enjoy handling and holding them. Be delicate in handling the fine bones of their wings and feet, and a gentle grip that leaves them a little space to wiggle without allowing them to flap excessively is best. They can spend some time away from their lamp, either being handled or exploring the world. When we observe mother hens/ducks tending very young chicks/ducklings in 50 degree plus weather, they explore for 20-30 minutes before mother hen calls them all in under her for a warming session. We consider that to be a hen approved time window for the youngest of chicks. With practice you will get a sense of when they seem cold and need to be back in the brooder.

Feel free to email, text or call us with questions. Michaela@newvillagefarm.com 802-338-0116 or Mo@newvillagefarm.com 207-400-5676