



KAHAROA SCHOOL

CHICKEN BOOKLET



CARING FOR YOUR CHICKEN

Chickens are a great way to participate in Lamb, Calf and Chicken Day. They still need lots of love and attention but are a little less work than lambs or calves. They still make great pets and in time should provide you with a little parcel every day.

Each year we order new chicks from a hatchery in New Plymouth. The chicks are usually day old Brown Shavers and if looked after well will produce high class eggs once they are about five months old. You are able to use other chickens that you source yourself.

To be eligible to enter chickens must be born between 20th July and 25th September of current year.

There are four categories: Senior (Yr 6, 7 & 8) / Intermediate (Yr 4 & 5) / Junior (Yr 1-3) and Preschool.

WARMTH

See that the chickens are warm as this is their first need – chicks will not start to feed if they are cold. If you need a quick warm up when you get the chicks home use a hot water bottle covered with a towel. You will know they are warm when they start to feed.

Temperatures should be approx 33° Celsius for the first week and reduced weekly until down to about 15° Celsius. They can be kept in a hot water cupboard for the first couple of nights until other arrangements are made. However some hot water cupboards are not very warm so keep this in mind.

HOUSING

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 a 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 30cm x 24cm x 24cm 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 40 or 60 watt bulb and later a 25 watt suspended about 300mm above the chicks will provide a suitable temperature.

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.***

See that all housing facilities are kept extremely clean at all times and try not to handle your chicken too much. Chickens are not toilet trained and will often use their drinking water as a toilet. Keep a good eye on your chicken's water and food.

FOOD AND WATER

See diagram included for ideas. Your chickens will need:

- 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.

Give the chickens access to cool water in a suitable receptacle so that the chickens do not get wet. They will then be in a condition to start feeding. The most suitable food is chick starter crumble which contains the correct vitamins, or fine chick grain. This is obtainable from Farmlands, RD1, or other feed merchants or stock and station agents. If you have not got these, the chicks may be started on coarse oatmeal or rolled oats, even a hardboiled egg chopped finely will assist.

The rule of thumb for feeding – make sure the chickens eat all their food in 15 minutes, twice a day, otherwise they are getting too much to eat.

You could try to weigh and measure your chicken and record how much it grows.

SOME THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT CHICKENS:

- Chickens are covered in fluffy down, which is different from true feathers. It consists of several fluffy threads coming from the same root. Later on, this down is pushed out by the true feathers, which grow from the same socket. These feathers appear on the wing tips at five to six days old
- Chickens have no teeth, so they cannot chew their food and they swallow it whole. The food is ground up during digestion by the gizzard. The gizzard is part of the chicken's stomach. The gizzard contains grit eaten by the chicken that helps break up the food.
- Chickens hatch from eggs after 21-day incubation. From 8 to 18 weeks a female chicken is called a 'pullet' a male is called a 'cockerel'. An adult female is a 'hen' and an adult male is a 'rooster'.
- Chickens are wet when they are born.
- Feeding - they eat grain, slugs, worms, bread, bugs, and insects. They need energy, protein, minerals and vitamins in their food the same as humans.
- A chicken has four toes
- A chicken has no muscles in its throat, so to swallow water it first fills its beak with water, and then tilts its head back so the water will trickle down its throat.
- The inner eyelids cross from side to side, meeting in the middle; the outer ones move up from the bottom. Look at your own eyes and see the difference.
- Chickens are full-grown in about six months.

Breeds

Some farmers breed chickens for their looks like Gold silkies and bantams. Some other breeds are:

Shavers, Bantam, Barred Plymouth Rock, Barnevelder, Leg Horn, Minorca, New Hampshire Red, Orpington, Rhode Island Red.

Parasites

Chickens suffer from parasites, both external and internal.

Internal parasites : worms

External parasites: lice, mites

COMPETITION DAY

On Lamb, Calf & Chicken Day bring your chicken along in a cage with some feed, water and a little bedding (such as hay).

The judge will then judge your chicken on the following criteria and also ask some questions about your chicken.

Presentation and Care

- Condition – how heavy the chicken is, how healthy and well cared for it looks.
- How tame your chicken is.
- The quietness of the bird – you must handle the chick a lot (as it gets older) and talk to it.
- Cleanliness – of beak, feet and vent.
- Feathers – no dirt or broken feathers on show day. If there are broken feathers this will go against the bird in judging.
- Speediness – this year we are racing the chickens for the first time.

Chicken Races

Chicken races will be in Junior, Intermediate and Senior categories. The winners will receive a trophy at prize-giving. The recommended procedure for the race will be the child teaching the chicken to follow with chicken food in the child's hand.

Knowledge

Some questions you may be asked:

(All questions suitable for Intermediate & Senior.)

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| 1. What is your chicken's name? | Junior |
| 2. Why is it important to keep your chickens warm? | Junior |
| 3. Where is its ear? | Junior |
| 4. Where does your pet sleep? | Junior |
| 5. Can your pet do tricks? | Junior |

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| 6. Can you catch your pet if you let it go? | Junior |
| 7. What do you feed it? | Junior |
| 8. What is an adult male called? | Junior |
| 9. How many toes has a chicken? | Junior |
| 10. Do chickens have teeth? | Junior |
| 11. How old is your chicken? | Junior |
| 12. What breed is your chicken? | Junior |
| 13. What are some breeds of hens? | |
| 14. How does a hen eat and digest its food? | |
| 15. What is a pullet? | |
| 16. Which part of the egg is made first? | |
| 17. Name two parasites that affect chickens. | |
| 18. Are chickens wet when they are born? | |
| 19. When do feathers appear on the wing tips? | |
| 20. What part of the chicken starts with the letter G? | |

Good luck and have a fantastic time!

Remember that the most important thing is that you have raised and cared for a young animal. Knowing all the answers to the questions, calling or following and presentation are not the most important thing. You caring for your chicken and your participation in Ag Day is the most important thing.

If you want to look for books on chickens you can find them in the library under the Dewey number 636.5.

