

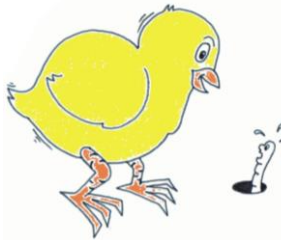
# TAKING CARE OF YOUR CHICKS

## KEEPING YOUR CHICKS WARM AND SHELTERED

For the first two weeks after hatching, the chicks will require a heat source. A 60W bulb, with a shade, suspended 10 to 15 centimeters above the chicks should suffice. Allow the chicks to choose their own ideal temperature by giving them space and freedom to move either away from or closer to the heat source. You will also need to keep them protected from draughts.



When the chicks are newly hatched, the temperature under the heat source should be kept at 35°C. This should then be reduced to 30°C over the space of 7 days. By the time they are 4 weeks old, the chicks should be able to cope with a temperature of approximately 20°C to 25°C. At this point, the heat source can be removed, although it should be returned to the brooding area at night during winter or at any time the weather is cold. If the weather is warm the chicks can be placed in a larger henhouse at night but you will need to ensure that they are protected from heat, wind, rain and predators.



By the time the chicks are 8 to 10 weeks old they can be placed in an open air run, or allowed to free range in a safe environment. As chickens do a lot of scratching in the dirt and tend to eat the leaves of plants, an enclosed run that can be moved around is advisable. This will protect your garden beds as well as your chickens. The good news is that chickens do eat weeds, snails and insects, including termites, and they also produce manure, which is a wonderful fertiliser for your garden!

## FEEDING YOUR CHICKS

Providing the correct feed and ensuring that fresh food and water is available at all times is important to the health of the chicks. From the time they hatch until the time they are about 6 weeks old, a high protein crumble, such as *Chick Starter* is recommended. Between 6 weeks and 14 weeks their feed should be changed to a grower ration, such as *Chick Grower*. By the time they reach point of lay, which is usually between 14 weeks and 18 weeks, they should be eating a calcium rich laying mash, or laying pellets. All of these products should be available at your local produce store. You should also be able to get advice from your local produce merchant regarding when to change your chicks from one feed-type to the next.

In addition, chickens need access to shell grit (available from your produce store) to help them grind food in their crops. Shell grit also provides calcium to assist in the laying of well-formed eggs. Adult chickens can also be provided with sorghum, cracked corn and oats.

To ensure that feed is readily available, and to reduce feed wastage, suspended tube feeders can be used. Young chicks and laying hens drink more water than you expect, so you need to make sure that clean, fresh water is also always available. A chick drinker, available from your produce store, can be used for this purpose. Both feeders and drinkers should be checked, cleaned and refilled regularly.

## Household Scraps

Chickens will enjoy household scraps as they get older but these scraps should be given in addition to, not instead of, their pellets or mash. It may be beneficial to introduce scraps gradually from 4 to 6 weeks old. For example, you could start with a lettuce leaf then gauge their interest in the food. This will help to guide you with how much and how often to offer scraps and when to increase the variety. You also need to be aware that not all household scraps are suitable for chickens. The guide below should provide a good starting point.

**Suitable Scraps:** lettuce, cauliflower, cabbage leaves, silver-beet, apple cores, breadcrumbs, rice, pasta, lawn clippings



**Unsuitable Scraps:** tomato skins, orange peel, banana peel, rhubarb leaves, raw potato, tea leaves

## A FEW IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- Always wash your hands both before and after handling the chicks.
- There may be traces of nuts in the chicken food or hysorb (wood shavings), as these products are processed on machinery that also manufactures livestock feed.

## KNOW YOUR CHICKS

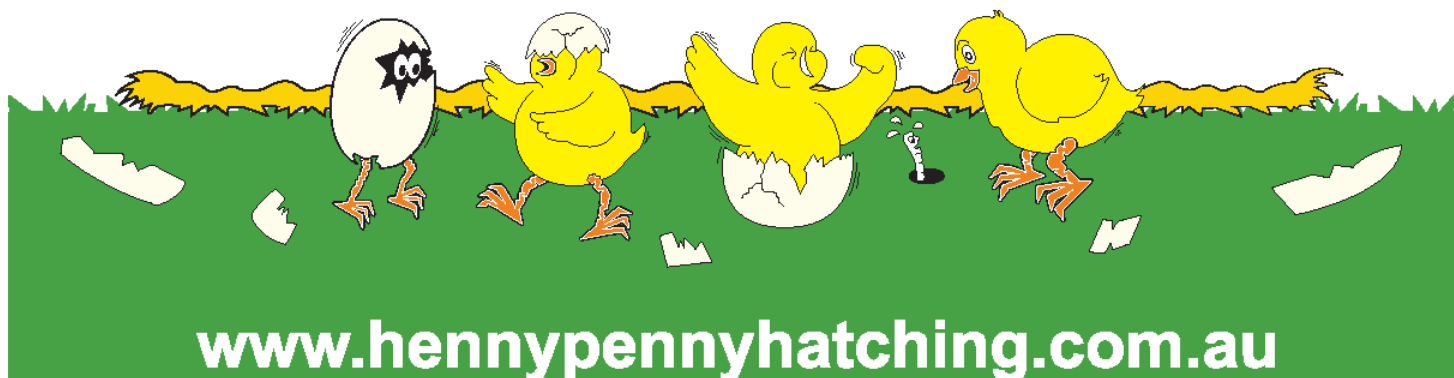
The chicks that hatch from the eggs we provide will be of one of the following colours and breeds:

- **Black** – Bond Black Layer (similar to Australorp)
- **Pale Yellow; Caramel (with brown stripes); Caramel (without brown stripes)** – Bond Brown Layer (hybrid, similar to Isa Brown)

Both breeds produce excellent laying hens.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

If you go to our website you will find further information and links to sites which will give you helpful advice on raising chickens. You can also chat to the staff at your local produce store.



## [IDEAS FOR BACKYARD CHICKEN COOPS](#)



A McCallum Made Chicken Tractor (left), available at [www.thechickentractor.com.au](http://www.thechickentractor.com.au)

For some fantastic ready-mades, or some great tips for building your own chicken coop, have a look at the following websites:



[www.backyardchickencoops.com.au](http://www.backyardchickencoops.com.au)  
[www.chickencoopsaustralia.com.au](http://www.chickencoopsaustralia.com.au)

Both sites sell interesting, practical coops and also provide ideas and materials for some great DIY projects.

