

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ANSWERED!

Over the years many families have requested information regarding the raising and care of chicks, together with other additional information relevant to our program. We hope that the following may be of some help.

## **Q. Where do the eggs come from?**

*A. The eggs used by Henny Penny Hatching (HPH) come from a commercial breeding farm, which supplies the poultry industry with the layer hens that produce your table eggs.*

## **Q. How do we know they are disease free?**

*A. The health of the flocks is strictly supervised by both the owner of the breeding farm and the Department of Primary Industry. Flocks are protected from Infectious Bronchitis (IB), Newcastle Disease and are PPLO free.*

## **Q. Do the birds at the breeding farm lay their eggs in cages?**

*A. The birds run freely and are not caged.*

## **Q. What breed are the chicks?**

*A. The breeds used for producing eggs for the HPH programme are Australorp, New Hampshire Sussex, Black and White Leghorn, and Lohmanns.*

## **Q. How can we be sure that the eggs are clean?**

*A. The eggs used in the HPH program are sterilized before incubation to eradicate any bacteria on the egg shell.*

## **Q. How do you know that the chicks are free of disease?**

*A. The hatched chicks enjoy natural parental immunity from disease for 3 weeks after hatching.*

## **Q. Can we catch 'bird flu' or 'avian flu' from the chicks?**

*A. Chicks do NOT have avian flu when they hatch. They cannot be infected by avian flu unless they come into contact with an adult bird that already has the avian flu, therefore you will NOT catch the avian flu from them.*

## **Q. Why can't we take the chicks out of the hatcher as soon as they hatch?**

*A. The chicks need to rest when they initially hatch then left in the hatcher until they are fully dried out. If they are moved from the hatcher before this, the chicks already in the brooding area will peck at them in an attempt to clean them up, which can lead to problems.*

**Q. Where do the chicks go after you collect them?**

*A. Each Henny Penny franchisee has at least one contact person, e.g. a local hobby farmer, who will take the chicks and rear them.*

**Q. Why can't we take just one chick home?**

*A. Chicks need the warmth of each other in the first few weeks. They are social animals and are happiest when with others of their own kind. In every flock there is a leader who is top of the pecking order. The pecking order reduces stress in the flock by ensuring each chicken knows how to relate to every other chicken around it. If you were to take only one chick home it would become distressed.*

**Q. Do you use hormones with the chicks?**

*A. The feed used, ('Chick Starter Crumb'), is highly nutritious for young chicks and does not contain hormones. HPH only uses layer strain eggs for its program and as laying birds need to keep their body weight down to maintain high egg production, hormones are not needed in the ration.*

**Q. How can we tell the sex of the chicks?**

*A. The sexing of chicks is a specialist operation. Within the poultry industry there are three recognized methods of sexing, and each requires specialised knowledge. The first method is the examination of the chick's internal organs, the second method is feather sexing and the third method is the sourcing of breeds that are sex linked. Other than that, it is impossible to tell if your chicks will become male or female until they are 6 to 8 weeks of age.*

**Q. How long do chickens live?**

*A. A chicken may live for 10 to 15 years. Chickens used for meat production have a short life of 5-6 weeks, while layer chickens live longer and produce eggs for at least 2 to 3 years.*

**Q. How many eggs will a chicken produce?**

*A. Each hen will produce approximately 270 to 300 eggs per year. She will consume approximately 1 kg of feed per week and drink approximately 2 ½ cups of water per day.*

**Q. At what age can we expect our chickens to start laying?**

*A. The chicks you take home will need to be 16 to 19 weeks of age before they commence laying. The actual age they start will vary depending upon the type of feed they have received.*

**Q. What is the difference between the eggs provided by Henny Penny and the eggs we eat?**

*A. Eggs on the retailer's shelf are edible 'table eggs' and as they are infertile they cannot be incubated. You do not require a rooster for the hens to lay table eggs. The eggs provided by Henny Penny Hatching have been fertilised by a rooster.*

**Q. What do we feed the chicks?**

*A. Initially you can feed them either 'Chick Starter Crumb' or 'Chick Starter Crumble', which can be purchased at a produce store. Your local produce merchant will advise you of a suitable feeding regime for your layer chicks.*

**Q. What can we do to prevent the chicks becoming noisy and flapping their wings?**

*A. If you warn the chicks of your approach, e.g. by talking, whistling or singing as you approach their enclosure, you will rear a calm flock which will be easier to handle. Make sure they always have sufficient heat, water and feed. Contented chicks are quiet.*

**Q. How do chicks communicate?**

*A. Chicks use at least 30 different sounds to communicate. Pay attention to the sounds you hear and to what activity it relates and you will be able to close your eyes, listen and know what the chicks are doing.*

**Q. What happens if we find we have a rooster?**

*A. Approximately 50% of the chicks will be roosters and 50% of them will be pullets. We are only able to take back chicks that have hatched when we collect the equipment. After this, it will be up to you to find a suitable relocation for them. We ask you to consider your legal responsibilities before taking any chicks home as it is illegal to own a rooster in suburbia and fines do apply. Please read [Ethical Issues](#) and [Adopting Chicks](#) on our website if you are considering taking chicks home. If you do happen to find yourself with a rooster that you can't keep, we recommend that you contact your local produce merchant to see if he/she knows anyone who may take the rooster. In some areas there is a service that will come and collect your rooster, but a charge would normally apply.*

**Finally, in response to a question that has been raised several times now, please note that we have no association with the fast food outlet, 'Henny Penny Foods'.**