

Preparing for your Hatching Program

Your program will arrive on the day/date stated in your letter of confirmation. We endeavour to deliver multiple programs as quickly as possible, to ensure that everyone receives their embryos in good condition. To assist us it is important that you have the following ready:

- 1 table which is approximately 80cm x 125cm in size and within reach of a power point OR 1 table which is approximately 80cm square and 1 table which is approximately 40cm square and within reach of a power point. If possible, the table/s should be away from direct sunlight and drafts.
- Access to cold water (to fill chick drinker) and warm water (to fill hatcher bottle).
- A responsible person appointed to monitor the hatcher and brooding area. We will need to talk to this person to discuss any areas of the program that he/she may be uncertain about. The designated person will be responsible for:-
 - Monitoring the temperature of the hatcher during the first hour.
 - Removing chicks and shells from the hatcher when the chicks are ready to be moved.
 - Checking the brooding area daily, topping up the water and feed and raking the shavings.
 - Placing a notice near the hatcher which states:-

“Please do not lift the hatcher lid; otherwise our embryos may not hatch!”

Introducing the Hatching Program to Your Students

Teaching the children to be responsible for the welfare of the chicks can help you overcome potential problems and have a ‘good hatch.’ Here are some tips.

- Explain to the children that the temperature inside the hatcher will go down if the lid is lifted but more importantly the humidity is lost. This causes the membrane to stick to the shell, preventing the chick inside the egg from being able to breathe. The eggs will not hatch if this happens.
- Explain to the children that they must ask you first before picking up a chick from the brooding area. You will need to show them the correct way to do this.
- Teach the children that they must sit down to hold a chick. This minimizes the potential for a chick to be dropped and hurt.
- We have found that teaching the children to keep their hands behind their backs when watching the chicks is an excellent behavioural benchmark. Some centers place tape on the ground to define the boundaries of a ‘NO GO’ zone.

Introduction of these ideas will all help to instill responsible attitudes in the children themselves and also encourage them to make sure that the members of their peer group are careful when handling the chicks.

To ensure that the children can all see the chicks pipping and emerging from their shell, and to further reduce any problems associated with children jostling for a view, the 360 degree dome hatcher needs to be placed at their eye level.

Daily Monitoring of the Incubation Unit

Humidity in the Hatcher

The heating element in the dome, together with the warm water in the bottle attached to the hatcher, produce humidity. Humidity is important as it helps the chicks through the hatching period, preventing them from sticking to the inside of their shells.

Temperature in the Hatcher

The red light in the top of the dome shows when the heater is operating and will go off when the temperature, to which the hatcher has been set, has been reached. **The correct temperature is between 99 and 101 degrees Fahrenheit.** Please be aware of the following:

- You will need to check the thermometer every 15 minutes for the first hour, as it is important that the hatcher reaches an optimum heat of 99 degrees within the first hour after delivery of your program.
- The thermometer should be placed at the front of the incubator and be visible at all times. You should continue to check the temperature at regular intervals throughout the hatching process to ensure that it is being maintained.
- If the temperature is too high or too low it will affect the embryo's hatching.
- The hatcher has been preset and run for 24hrs before delivery; however some outside factors (such as room temp, sunlight or drafts) may affect the temperature, so you do need to monitor it.

If you have any concerns regarding the temperature, please contact your franchisee on the number you have been given.

Maintaining Temperature and Humidity and Looking after the Hatcher

It is critical that both the temperature and the humidity are maintained during the hatching process. To ensure that this is the case, please observe the following:

- View the chicks hatching through the clear plastic dome and only open the dome (hatcher lid) to remove chicks and eggshells. **Do not lift the dome to view as the temperature will drop, the humidity will be affected and the embryos will suffer.**
- When removing chicks and eggshells, work quickly to minimize the temperature drop. Ensure that, when the dome is replaced, it is seated correctly in the groove to keep in the heat. The temperature should adjust itself back to optimum level within 1 hour. It is important to make sure that the thermometer is easy to view at all times so that you can monitor this).
- In winter, place a towel around the lower section of the hatcher at night to prevent loss of heat.
- Make sure that you do not accidentally turn the hatcher off by disconnecting it from the power supply. **Ensure that your cleaning staff, and anyone else who may access the building you are in, know not to unplug the unit or turn off the power.**
- If you have a power failure, please contact us immediately.
- **Do not clean the dome or put it in water** (see section on cleaning) at any time as this will stop it from working.

When Will the Chicks Hatch?

The eggs provided have been set to hatch over 5 days, having already been incubated for 15 to 18 days.

Chicks will hatch in this order over the first 5 days of the program:

- Pink
- Blue
- Purple
- Green

As in nature not all the eggs will hatch. This may in part be due to the development of the air sac in the egg prior to incubation.

When Should the Chicks be Removed from the Hatcher?

The chicks will emerge from their shell wet and sticky. They need to remain in the hatcher until they are dry and fluffy, (like the chicks which were delivered to you on day 1).

When the chicks are dry and fluffy:

- Remove the dome lid by lifting it upwards and towards you so that you do not disturb the water bottle.
- Take the chicks out of the hatcher and place them in the brooding area, underneath the lamp for warmth.
- Remove any shells from the hatcher to prevent odour.
- Make sure the thermometer is still seated on the base and easy to view.
- Replace the dome as quickly as possible, making sure it is seated properly in the groove.

Note that chicks do not require food or water until they are moved from the hatcher, as they live off their internal yolk sac for up to 3 days.

Care of the Chicks in the Brooding Area

Feeder

Make sure that there is feed available at all times in the feeder provided and please note the following:

- Each morning, remove the top of feeder, clean out any shavings that have accumulated in the feeder and top it up with feed from the bucket provided.
- Do not over fill the feeder as the chicks waste it by scratching it out into the litter, and you may run out of feed.
- The feeder needs to be placed towards the centre of the brooding area with the light shining on it, otherwise the chicks will not feed properly.

Water

Water should be available at all times in the drinker provided and please note the following:

- Keep the drinker on the block provided to prevent the litter from fouling the water. Chicks need access to the water at all times, so remove any litter that happens to accumulate in the lip of the drinker.
- Make sure the drinker is refilled daily. To fill the drinker, turn it upside down, remove the green base, fill the top part with water, replace the base firmly and then turn the whole drinker upright.
- The drinker needs to be positioned towards the centre of the brooding area, where the light shines on it. The chicks will not initially venture away from the heat source so the water needs to be visible to them underneath the lamp.

Brooding Lamp

Once outside the hatcher the chicks require a brooding temperature of 90 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Please observe the following once the chicks are in the brooding pen:

- They need to be under a bulb or heat lamp and protected from drafts.
- Ideally the temperature of the room the brooding pen is in should be 70 degrees Fahrenheit.
- As the chicks grow they may not require as much heat. If the chicks are consistently moving to the outside edges of the brooding area, and they seem more settled in that area, they are most likely too hot, so you may need to raise the lamp a little higher during the day. If the nights are cold, make sure that you lower the lamp again at night. You will be able to tell that the chicks are warm, settled and comfortable if they are lying around the perimeter of the lamp area facing outwards.
- If the chicks are on the outside edges of the brooding area but they are chirping, this suggests that they are actually too cold, so you need to pick them up and place them beneath the lamp. This may happen in the early days because they have forgotten where the heat is.

Litter

Chicks often dribble water when they are drinking and this will cause dampness in the litter. Remove any wet litter from the brooding pen and further prevent any odour from occurring by regularly using the provided rake to aerate the litter. This will allow the lamp to dry out any slightly damp areas.

Weekend Care

You will need to ensure that the chicks are kept warm and that they have enough food and water over the weekend. If you are unable to check on them over a weekend due to alarms, etc. please advise us so that we can discuss alternative care arrangements with you.

Hatcher Clean-Up

At the end of the first week please:

- Empty the water out of the base of the hatcher and the water bottle.
- Remove any eggs that have not hatched, place them in a small plastic bag and tie it tightly, then place the bag in a garbage bin outside.
- Remove any loose shells and wash both the blue base and the wire gauze
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Following these steps will prevent the development of odours and keep the flies away. **Please do not attempt to clean the dome and always handle the thermometer with care as these items are fragile!!**

Brooding Area Clean Up

We collect the equipment on the 12th day (Friday). To assist us with our pick ups, could you please attend to the following:

- If you wish to use the wood shavings from the brooding area in your garden, make sure it has been removed from the tray by early Friday morning. We have found that the shavings provide excellent mulch for gardens.
- Please wash the chick drinker and the chick feeder.
- Should parents wish to take the chicks, please see that there are boxes available into which the chicks can be transferred before we arrive. Alternatively, parents may wish to collect the chicks from your centre on either Wednesday or Thursday afternoon.

Thank you for your help!

Handy tips

- **Noisy chicks** (loud cheeping) are lacking heat, water or food.
- **The chicks are too hot** if they are lying around the perimeter of the brooding area (away from the heat). Reduce the heat by raising the lamp slightly.
- **The chicks are too cold** if they are under the lamp and are still noisy. Lower the lamp slightly to provide more heat.
- **Contented chicks** are active, quiet and rest in an area close to, but not immediately underneath, the lamp.
- **Tape down the dome** (using the tape provided) to prevent children and parents lifting it.
- **If a chick is being pecked or attacked** by the other chicks place some tea tree oil, vapour rub (Vicks) or similar substance on the chick that is being pecked.