

Be Safe
Baby birds carry germs



Chicks and ducklings may appear healthy and clean, but they can carry germs that cause illness. The germs that poultry shed in their droppings can contaminate their bodies, the areas where they live, and even the things that they touch.

Salmonella is one type of germ spread by live poultry, and it can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea in people. You can contract this bacteria by snuggling with or kissing baby birds, as well as through hand-to-mouth contact after touching them.

Serious complications are rare, but are more likely to occur in the very young, the very old and people with existing health problems. By maintaining a clean brooding area and remembering to wash you hands after caring for your birds, you can decrease the chance of illness.

Raising live poultry can be fun.

By following the recommendations provided, your experience can be safe and rewarding.

Want to learn more?

For more information about raising poultry safely, check out these websites:

The University of Maine extension:
<http://umaine.edu/livestock/poultry/>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pets/farm-animals/backyard-poultry.html>

For more information about salmonella and other infectious diseases:

Maine CDC's website:
<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/disease/salmonellosis.shtml>

or call:

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
(800) 821 - 5821

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
(207) 287- 3200

Brochure courtesy of Vermont Department of Health and Agency of Agriculture Food & Markets



Stay healthy

while caring for your new duckling or chick



A guide to raising, housing, and caring for your baby bird



Thoughtful preparation is essential before purchasing baby poultry.

Protect yourself and your family from germs.

Children under five years old and people with weak immune systems should not handle birds. Wash your hands with soap and water after handling your birds or soiled equipment.



A baby bird is raised in a controlled environment called “brooder.” A brooder should be placed in a warm, dry area. Cages, cardboard boxes, and aquariums can be used for this purpose.

- Most standard brooders contain a heat lamp, a thermometer, food and water dispensers, absorbent liner, and a wooden perch for the birds to roost.
- Brooders should be well-ventilated and offer at least two square feet of space per bird, with additional room for food and water dispensers.

Choose a safe location for your brooder! Never place a brooder in your kitchen or any area where food or drink is prepared, served or stored.

ABSORBENT LITTER

Wood shavings, hay, and other types of absorbent litter are suitable materials for lining a brooder.

- Newspaper is not a recommended lining material since it lacks absorbency and the ink can run if it gets wet.
- Hay is the best liner for a duck brooder since ducklings may become sick if they eat wood shavings.
- Lining materials should not be allowed to remain damp with animal waste, and should be changed regularly.

Wash your hands!

Prevent the spread of germs by washing your hands after touching litter or any other cage materials.

TEMPERATURE

The brooder’s temperature should be approximately 95°F during a bird’s first week of life, and can be gradually reduced by 5° F per week until ambient temperature is reached.



- Lamps with white light bulbs and reflectors can be used to heat the brooder, but red heat bulbs are more effective.
- When birds huddle together under the lamp, they are too cold. When they are panting and dispersed to the corners of the brooder, they are too hot. Adjust the temperature accordingly.
- When birds outgrow their brooder and are able to withstand temperatures of 70°F and cooler, they can be moved to an outdoor predator-resistant coop.

WATER

Young birds drink a lot, so fresh water must be available at all times. A medium sized plastic water dispenser is ideal since it is lightweight, yet difficult to spill.

NUTRITION

Specific types of feed have been developed for each stage of a bird’s life. Be sure to choose the appropriate feed based on the age and type of bird.

- *Starter feeds*, sometimes called “crumbles,” are available for both ducklings and chicks 0-16 days old.
- After about 14 days, chicks and ducklings can eat ‘snacks’ such as worms and bugs. Vegetables and fruits can be fed to ducklings, but these foods cause stomach illness in chicks.
- *Finisher Feeds* are enriched pellets fed to chicks after they are 16 days old. Ducklings usually begin eating pelleted feed when they are three weeks old.

FEEDERS

When birds scratch at their food and drag it across the floor of their brooder, it can become contaminated with germs. Commercial feeders, which are designed to keep food in place, are preferable to small dishes that can be easily spilled.



Clean materials regularly! Scrub food and water dispensers often, and wash your hands after handling food and feeding materials.