



Step 5 - Hatch Day

The part we have all been waiting for - watching the cute fuzzy chicks emerge from their shells. It all starts with a pip!



HATCHING HAS BEGUN

Pip, Zipper, and Hatch

Look for little bits of egg missing on the shells - that's a pip

The first step of the hatch is the pip - a small hole in the shell that allows air to get inside that can sometimes be as small as a grain of black pepper. Several hours after the chick pips and gets its first outside air it will begin chipping away at the shell, forming a line of pips along the side of the egg - this is called zippering. Once the egg is zippered it is often quite soon after that the chick begins to push at the walls of the shell and emerges.

The chicks will be wet, awkward, and sleepy. With short bursts of energy they will make their way around the inside of the incubator, chirping loudly, and inspiring the other chicks that it's time - let's get hatching!

Note the first hatch time, if you are there for it. If they hatch when you are not present make a rough estimate. The chicks have consumed enough contents of the egg to survive and thrive for a couple full days after they emerge, and if it goes a bit longer due to unknowns they will still be fine.

Whatever you do - whatever circumstances arise - under no conditions can you open the incubator. It must remain closed until all of the eggs have hatched or you risk terminating the remaining chicks inside their shells. Called "shrink wrapping", it occurs when incubators are opened prematurely and the drop in temperature and humidity causes the membrane on the inside of the egg to contract. If you are tempted to assist a chick in the process of emerging from its shell, please refrain.

PREPARING THE BROODER

Shavings, heat, food, and water

Let's get your brooder set up and tested before it's needed

You've already selected the location for your brooder and now is the time to set it up and ensure the heat plate works and the shavings have been patted down enough to keep the waterer from tipping. You can wait to fill the feed and water but now is a good time to add the shavings to the tote, pat them down evenly across the bottom, and place the heat plate inside. We have provided enough wood shavings to fill the bin as well as have extra for replacement if needed - use around 3/4 of the shavings provided on the initial fill. Position the heat plate so the power cord is in a good position for you and plug it in.

When the chicks are placed into the brooder for the first time they will need a temperature that is similar to the incubator. The heat plates are designed to be lowered to increase heat and raised to decrease heat. Set it low - it may be lower than you think is needed. Tilt the side closest to the middle of the brooder up, like a ramp but without any extreme grade, so the chicks can easily walk under it and if they do get cold can move to the lower end of the heat plate. If they get too warm they can once again migrate to the higher end of the heat plate.

Once you have the brooder set up, and the heat plate is operating and producing heat, you can unplug the heat plate.

PREPARING WATER

Not too hot, not too cold

You might want to leave a bottle or pitcher of water on the counter

Chicks are thirsty, and as you will learn in the next step the first thing they experience is water. They live in a dome that sits at 38°C and anything much warmer or cooler than that is shocking. If you can, set a container of water aside in the room now so when it's needed it has already reached room temperature. The room is likely closer to 20°C but that is a lot more comfortable to them than cold water straight from the tap. A juice pitcher or 2L soda bottle are good containers to keep on the counter top.

