



# Hatching FAQ

Here are some answers to commonly asked questions about the School Egg Hatching Program as well as general hatching information not in other sections of this guide.



## TIMELINE

### How long does the program last?

From drop off to pick up the entire process lasts around one month

In the example schedule that you can see below the eggs are delivered on Monday, the 4th of May (Step 2), and the chicks are returned to Pips Farm on Friday, the 5th of June. In this example the eggs are chicken eggs, which incubate for 21 days total - but there are two stages of the process, incubation and hatch. On Wednesday, the 6th of May, the eggs are placed into the incubator having rested for around 48hrs (Step 3). The incubation stage lasts 18 days, but because of the constraints of weekends and having the students participate in each stage we are going to "lock down" the eggs and prepare for the hatching stage on Monday, the 25th of May (Step 4).

Ideally the hatching of the eggs occurs on the Wednesday, May 27th (Step 5), though it could happen as soon as Tuesday or as late as Thursday. On Friday, the 27th of May, the chicks are transferred to the brooder (Step 6) where they will remain in your care for one week. On Friday, the 5th of June, the chicks are collected and return to Pips Farm.

## EASY, MEDIUM, AND HARD

### Picking the right species

Nobody ever said that hatching quail would be easy

We have graded our various poultry species with Easy, Medium, and Hard difficulties. Choosing the right type of bird to incubate might be compelled by your availability, the age of your students, and your experience with hatching chicks.

Chickens are the easiest and there are very few problems you might encounter. They are hardy, medium sized, have a low mortality, and more often than not if an egg zippers you will eventually see a chick emerge from the shell. They can eat and drink well, do not need any special considerations, and the process is usually seamless.

Quail are assigned a medium difficulty and most of that is due to their higher mortality. It may be disturbing for young kids to see a quail laying deceased in its water dish or under the heat plate - and it's not always much better for the teacher if they don't have experience with livestock mortality. Quail are notorious for discovering new and novel ways to unalive themselves and each other, and though it is part and parcel of hatching their eggs, it might be something that you would prefer to avoid. Quail chicks also have a tendency to drown, which is why the water dish provided is so small. The down side of the water dish size is the need to refill it. If you chose quail you may be needed during the weekend to provide them with fresh water, but with the schedule that would only occur on one weekend before the chicks are collected.

Turkey eggs are sometimes available as well and we assigned the difficulty of "hard" for them, and it's almost entirely due to their higher likelihood to explode in the incubator. Close monitoring of the eggs can prevent that, but if it does occur it can have a much worse impact on a classroom than mortalities. The foul odor from an egg that has exploded can hardly be described - but it's something that anyone would opt to avoid. You can take our word for it. In the event an egg explodes that requires an emergency equipment and egg recovery, and the program is terminated. The remainder of the eggs are no longer considered viable and the incubator has to be completely disassembled and sterilized as soon as possible.

#### A STUCK CHICK

## One chick \*almost\* hatched

### What to do when a chick has not totally emerged

Farming can have some unfortunate realities, and hatching chicks is no exception. There is a chance that chicks hatch with underdeveloped appendages or other birth defects that can cause mortality and you feel like you should remove it from the incubator - don't. Sometimes a chick appears to be stuck to the inside of their egg and you would like to just pick that little bit of egg off - don't. Chicks can appear stuck between an egg and the incubator dome - just leave it. Sometimes chicks look like they are attacking other chicks and pecking at them and you are tempted to remove the aggressor - don't.

Once the hatching stage has begun, where the rotating disk has been removed and we are in "lock down" to hatch, the incubator should not be opened for any reason. The incubator is opened at the end of the hatching stage, regardless of one chick appearing to need assistance, and this is to ensure the health of the majority is not sacrificed to try to intervene and save the few.

If a chick still has a bit of shell stuck to it come time to place it in the brooder, place it in shell and all, call us, and we can determine a course of action. If a chick has balled up feet and appears to have difficulty walking, place it in the brooder and call us to determine a course of action. Most of the time these small issues correct themselves after a day or two, and if needed we can come in and monitor the situation ourselves.

#### CHICK MORTALITY

## The cycle of life

### What to do with a chick who doesn't survive

We ask that everything that is not consumed by the chicks is returned to us. That includes eggs that don't hatch, eggs that partially hatch, and chicks who do not survive. The best course of action when dealing with chick mortality is to place them in a ziplock bag and put them in a freezer. You can wrap it in paper towel, double or triple bag it, or place it in another container if discretion is required. If freezing the chick is not an option then please call us so we can decide the next course of action, which might mean recovering the chick immediately.

Chicks and eggs are not just assets - they may also be proprietary breeds or lineages. Though we generally don't provide eggs that are essentially intellectual property as well as assets to our farm, it could happen. Quail phenotypes that are useful for instruction may also take a long time to breed and chicken varieties sometimes cost hundreds of dollars for a single individual breeder. Our turkeys are a rare heritage breed, in fact Canada's only heritage breed, and we have a lot of investment into the lineages we have acquired.

As breeders we have poured time, energy, and literally tens of thousands of dollars into our breeding programs, from unique feather-footed black chickens with fibromelanosis, to pure bred Zombie chickens derived from selectively bred Hmong chickens. With this in mind, participants to our program are liable for returning the assets to us regardless of whether they survive or become deceased. Even eggs that do not hatch need to be inspected to determine the cause and to track any fertility and hatching issues.

OOPS

## We dropped an egg

### What to do when an egg is damaged or destroyed

We ask that you save the remains of the egg for us to dispose of ourselves. The shell can be placed in a ziplock bag or another container and frozen, or it can be allowed to dry. We need to account for all outgoing and incoming assets, and that egg is pretty important to us. We will definitely not be upset if an egg is damaged or destroyed in the process, it happens to the best of us, but we need to collect 12 shells if we delivered 12 eggs - regardless of their condition, if they hatched, if it's just chunks, or if it still has a deceased chick attached to it. The worst case scenario is that we need to visit on an emergency drop in and collect our assets because there is no option to store it.

All of our eggs have indicators on them that we can identify at the farm. Please do not attempt to swap out an egg, a shell, or a part of a shell. We can identify, without any difficulty, whether an egg shell is from our farm or has been sourced externally. The value of our IP requires us to be diligent, and even if the entire carton of eggs was dropped and all the eggs need to be replaced, we can live with that. We can collect the damaged eggs, replace them with a fresh batch of fertilized eggs, and the program can resume with only a small hiccup.

CONTRACT

## You are responsible

### We require every participant to sign a simple contract

We are not lawyers and our contracts reflect our casual approach at agreements. Simple language, short and concise, no legalese. Participants agree they are responsible for all assets. Eggs, chicks, and all equipment that isn't a consumable will be returned in good condition. The participant is responsible for any equipment damaged and at the time the chicks are collected a checklist is made and signed by Pips Farm and the participant.

"Good condition" means the incubator is covered in chick stuff, caked on, there's something growing in the bottles, the incubator dome is so filthy it needs to be disassembled to be cleaned, some disgusting material has been cooked into the incubator base, the heat plate is caked with guano, and the feed and water dishes were also used regularly as toilets. Hatching makes a mess - we know that.

"Bad condition" means the equipment has to be replaced, no question, and other classrooms who are waiting for the equipment to be available will miss out. It has to be reordered.

Fact is we won't sweat the small stuff.

DEFORMATIONS

## Emergency drop ins

Sometimes immediate action is needed

Every so often a birth defect can occur that can not be remedied and requires immediate action. These defects might be a low-priority issue like splayed legs that can reduce a chicks chances of survival. In other cases, such as when a chicks insides are not inside of it, require immediate action. As mentioned above, in the case you observe issues with chicks before all of the eggs have had a chance to hatch it's unwise to open the incubator. If it is severe enough we ask that you call us so we can determine the best course of action based on the circumstances and what you are comfortable doing yourself. It is an unfortunate reality that sometimes hatching requires immediate intervention that can be severe enough to warrant a cull.

If needed we will do an emergency drop-in and collect the chick to euthanize it off premises. Once you have called us we may ask you to provide a picture of the chick so we can see what condition it is in and determine the best course of action.

#### DEBRIS IN FEED AND WATER

## They are messy little things

Be sure to clear any wood shavings from dishes

You will want a waste bin of some kind nearby to be able to dispose of the wood shavings that will inevitably collect in the food and water dishes. Dry shavings in a food dish can often be brushed out of the dish and back into the brooder, but once water dishes have wood shaving debris in them it should be discarded in the trash. Wet shavings can get your chicks damp which can be detrimental.

#### SPILLAGE

## Water dishes can tip

You will receive extra wood shavings for this reason

If the wood chips in the brooder become wet as a result of the water dish spilling it will need to be addressed. Damp chicks get cold very quickly and it can increase mortality rates as well as just making them miserable. You will be provided extra wood shavings specifically for this reason. Remove the wet wood shavings from the brooder and set them aside to dry - you may need them later if the water dish is spilled again. If you can paper towel up any excess water in the bottom of the brooder it will help. Add dry shavings as needed, and in the event you are short on dry shavings because of a reoccurrence of spillage you may be able to move dry shavings from the opposite end of the brooder. If there is plastic exposed on the brooder paper towel can be used in place of shavings so the chicks have some grip when walking.

#### PASTY BUTT

## Giving chicks a clean

Just make sure it isn't the umbilical cord

Now and then a chick will accumulate feces around their vent, and an accumulation of feces can cause problems. Monitor the vent area of the chicks once a day for debris - it should be clear if there is fecal matter stuck to the downy feathers. If the chickens do have "pasty butt" prepare a shallow dish with warm water - just a bit warmer than your own hand temperature - and submerge the vent area in the water for some seconds. Using a paper towel the fecal matter should easily come off, and if it is persistent soak it further.

This comes with an important caveat however - sometimes the umbilical cord can be stuck near the vent and appear like fecal matter. Any attempt to remove the umbilical cord could result in a mortality, so look closely.

Feces will be a blot, a chunk, and it will clearly accumulate around the vent. An umbilical cord often resembles a dried worm, it is longer and thinner, and originates at and extends from the vent. An umbilical cord should be left alone.

#### SPLAYED LEG

# Chicks don't do the splits

Have a small cup on hand?

Splayed leg isn't common but you may experience it. Chicks don't take gymnastics so anything resembling the splits might be splayed leg. Making little leg braces and using vet tape to fasten them together is much worse to do than it sounds and we do not recommend attempting it. A better alternative is to place the chick inside a small cup in the brooder for 20-30mins at a time and repeat throughout the day. The cup needs to be small enough so the chicks legs are unable to splay on either side of it, and in time it should be able to stand and walk on its own.

