



Making a Brooder for Newly Hatched Chicks

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Rearing chicks in a classroom has serious limitations. However, if the chicks are to be kept for a few days, they should be placed in a brooding unit that will provide warmth, protection, and sufficient room for them to move about, eat, and drink. This is a plan for creating a simple brooding unit.

Equipment needed

- Clear storage bin
- Heat lamp (Fig. 1)
- Feeder and waterer
- Hardware cloth or wire cover for the box
- Litter for floor of box—wood shavings, sawdust, peat moss, sand, or other appropriate material

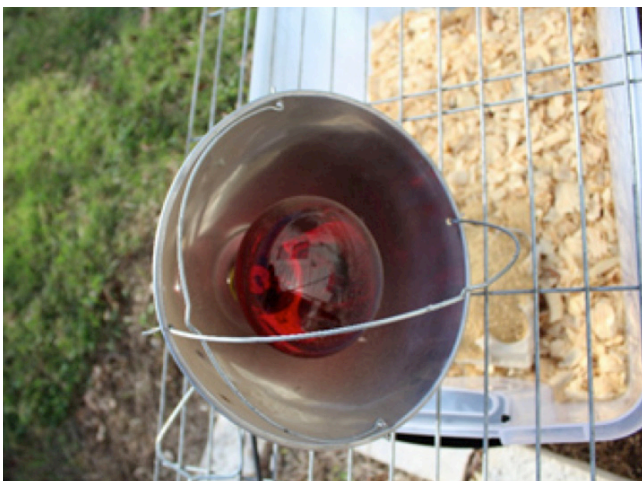


Figure 1: Heat lamp

The principles of brooding chicks are the same regardless of the number of chicks. The goals of a brooder are to keep the chicks:

- Warm
- Well fed and watered
- Protected from predators and dampness
- Provided with plenty of fresh air without being exposed to drafts.

This unit, when used in a warm place such as the home or school, will do the job.

The heat lamp will keep the chicks warm, but placement is key (Fig. 2). The temperature at litter level should be 90 to 95°F for the first week and



Figure 2: Wire cover keeping heat lamp a safe distance from the bottom of the bin.

dropped 5°F each week thereafter. It is important that the feed and water not be under the heat lamp and that the chicks have an area to move to that is outside the area directly under the heat lamp (Fig. 3). The chicks will tell you if they are not comfortable. When they are cold, they huddle together and when they are too warm, they will move as far as possible from the heat source.



Figure 3: Feed and water in the end of the bin opposite from the heat lamp.

Two to three inches of litter should be used on the floor of the box.* This will serve as insulation and as an absorptive material (Fig. 4). Use the hardware cloth or wire cover to form a lid for your brooder box.

*Never place birds, especially young ones, on a smooth surface. They cannot grip a slippery surface, and their legs tend to go out to the side causing a condition commonly called “spraddle leg.”



Figure 4: Litter placed in the bottom of the bin 2 to 3 inches deep.