

SOME HELPFUL HINTS

Cheep, cheep, cheep - Hope everyone is hearing lots of good little Giants at your home. I thought a few hints might come in handy for the smaller breeder. (1) If you use the small round bottom waterers, make sure to set them away from the edge of the pen. A chick can drown in a small waterer if it can't get freely between the waterer and the side of the pen.(2) Cardboard boxes such as washer/dryer boxes make handy pens for the just hatched chicks. We have used layers of newspaper and a top layer of rough or textured paper towels which can be easily changed. Newspapers without the paper towels or something similar on top will be too slick and may cause chicks to develop spraddled legs. We have also used smaller shavings after they are a week or so old and well acquainted with their feeders. Use an electric cord with a porcelain end and a light bulb. We usually start with a 100 watt bulb and work down to lower watts as the chicks get older. Tie the cord around a yardstick, place the yardstick across the back third of the box, and dangle the light bulb about a foot high above the chicks. Be sure the cord is securely fastened so the bulb does not fall down and start a fire. Cover the top of two thirds of the box over where the light is hanging down with large beach towels. Regulate the heat by the size of the bulb, height of the bulb, and how much of the top of the box is covered. The chicks should spread out evenly except when snuggling to sleep. If they are happy there shouldn't be a lot of loud cheeping. Also, use newspapers for insulation under a box set on a cold floor. Set your box brooder up a day or so before hatching so it will be nice and warm. When we get the chicks from the incubator and put them in the box we always dip their little beaks in the water so they know where it is. (3) If you hatch early, fresh chick starter is not always available. Some chicks do excellent on just starter and grit. Usually a starter with a good quantity of ground corn works best. We have used mashed up boiled egg, corn meal, and crumbled up oatmeal instead of starter for the first few days along with plenty of fresh water. (4) If your chicks have a problem with a dab on their rear end, you can very carefully pick it off. However, if they are having lots of problems, you might consider an adjustment to their feed.

Who is next? Send your hints for the next newsletter. Joyce Vaughn