



SINCE 1899

**Oropi  
School**

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# **Calf Club & Pet Day**

## **Chicken Information Booklet**

## To Begin

Great, you've decided to exhibit a chicken at your school's Calf Club.

## Where to get your chicken

Your school sources the chickens for Calf Club. You can order through school

Before collecting your chickens you may need to check you have a few essential things. (It is beneficial to have more than one chicken for warmth and company.)

## Brooder

Chickens in their natural environment have a mother hen to keep them warm and protect them from predators and weather changes.

To raise them without a hen you will need a brooder.

This can be as simple as a household light bulb over a cardboard box.

To keep the chickens near the heat source you will need to make an enclosure of metal or wood or, for a small number of chicks, the cardboard box is enough. Be sure to place your brooder in a draught free area.

Ideally the container should be circular so there are no corners where the chicks can huddle and smother each other.

They will need the light bulb substitute for at least four weeks.

Start with a 60 or 40 watt bulb on a flex and plug suspended over the box, about 300 mm above the chickens, then change to a 25 watt bulb as the chickens grow older. By this time they will have feathers in place of their fluffy yellow down.

## Check the temperature

Observe the chicks! If they huddle together under the light and cheep plaintively, you can bet they are too cold. Lower the light until they begin to fuss and do chicky things.

## Cleaning the brooder

A layer of wood shavings, changed every two days, or newspaper changed twice a day should be used.

The facilities MUST be kept extremely clean at all times. If they are too hot they will move away from the heat, pant and hold their wings away from their bodies. Raise the heat source until your chicks are comfortable.

## In your brooder...

You need, available at all times...

1. **Water.** A shallow, spill-proof water container, not too big as the chicks could drown.

Damp, muddy floors are a sure source of disease, particularly coccidiosis. Keep the water cool and fresh and away from the heat source as warm water will cause bowel troubles in the chicks.

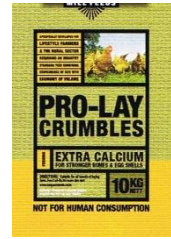
2. **Food.** A food container – a simple dish or jar lid. The most suitable food is Chick Starter Crumbles, which contain the correct vitamins and have an added coccidiostat which prevents the chicks from contracting coccidiosis which can kill your chicks quite suddenly. The chicks will need to be fed the crumbles until they are 6 – 7 weeks old.

If you don't have these, the chickens may be started on coarse oatmeal or rolled oats. Even a hard-boiled egg chopped finely will assist.

After a week or so, you can start feeding the chicks some very finely chopped greenstuff. Lettuce, clover leaf, silver beet and lucerne (alfalfa) leaf are excellent green feed for chicks.

After 7 weeks gradually introduce Prolay Crumbles (10 kg bags) mixed with Starter Crumbles over several days, until they are totally on Prolay at 12 weeks. (Young chickens will develop internal disorders if fed pellets.)

Adult hens require Prolay Pellets.



### Things to do if a chicken looks unwell.

- Make sure they are warm and not in a draught.
- Make sure they stay inside in the warm; not outside in the cold.
- Make sure they have food and fresh water.
- Make sure no bullying is happening.
- Check for lice and mites. Pet shops can advise you on treatments.

### Bigger house.

As the chickens grow, their house must be enlarged. A box 1 metre x 300 mm x 500 mm deep covered with chicken mesh is a good size. Have a weather-proof lid over a shelter at one end so you can put food in. This will also protect the chickens from dogs or cats.

You can put your cage outdoors when the weather warms, but make sure there is adequate shelter in case the weather changes for the worse.

You can let your chicken outside on the grass for half an hour (longer as the chicken grows).

Take them indoors at night. This helps them adjust to temperature changes and reduces the chance of them catching a chill. Also, this daily handling keeps your chickens quieter.

Eventually your chickens will be able to stay outdoors provided there is protection from the weather (should it turn nasty) and predators.

### Time

Make sure you have time to look after your chicken before and after school. Do NOT over-handle your chickens.

You will need to allow up to 30 minutes morning and afternoon to care for your pet.

This is your responsibility, not Mum and Dad's, so you may need to get up earlier in the morning and allow time in the afternoon. Your chicken will be dependent on you for its food and shelter because you will be its foster parent for the next two to three months.

It's a big responsibility but one from which you will enjoy great satisfaction.

### Breed

Chickens ordered through the school are all **Brown Shavers**, Bromley Park hatched. Only these can be used for Group Day. Chickens NOT purchased through the school can be entered in the Pet section only at Calf Club Day, but are not eligible for Group Day.

## Laying

At approximately 20 weeks your pullet will start to lay. This year's chickens should be laying by Christmas.



## Keep a Dairy

Remember to record the dates when your chicken was hatched, when it came to you and the milestones which happen during its time with you: when you changed the crumbles or pellets, etc.

A Calf Club Diary for chickens is available from the school.

## ON THE DAY

- Only chickens purchased through school are to be entered in this class.
- Remember to bring little containers with food and water.
- Present only one chicken in each cage, clearly labelled with the chicken's 'owner'. Sharing cages will lead to disqualification.

## Your judge is looking for...

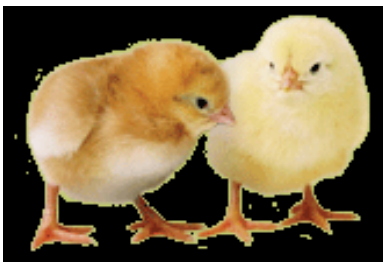
- A well grown bird...
- Without deformities such as twisted feet or beaks.
- How close they are to laying.
- The presence of external parasites.
- Feather condition.
- Comb colour and development.



## You're on your way.

If you've followed all the tips in this resource booklet you and your chicken are ready for a wonderful day!

Good luck!



## AFTER CALF CLUB

You can ask Mum and Dad about entering your chicken in Group Day. All chickens are eligible, whether they are awarded a ribbon at Calf Club or not.

If your chicken is going to be in more events, you will need to continue to be responsible for it.

## **FINALLY**

It's been a long season. You have done well.

You can be very proud that you took on a big task, and completed it.

You've fed and cared for your chicken over a long period of time; you've learned a lot about yourself and self-discipline (making yourself go out and feed it when you would rather not), and you've gained a lot of satisfaction from forming a friendship with an animal which relied on you.

Don't forget to say thanks to Mum & Dad for their support and help.

## **Congratulations.**

You've done really well!

