

positioning. Much like the human embryo, the unhatched chicks are aware of their outside environment—responding to the mother’s soothing sounds and the rooster’s warning cries. A few days before they are ready to hatch, the chicks begin peeping to let their mother know that they are ready to emerge and to draw her attention to any discomfort they may be feeling, such as cold or abnormal positioning.

Most children, as well as most adults, are not aware of the complex communication network that exists among the chicks and their mother. While the mother hen sits on her eggs, peeping, sawing, and breaking of shells goes on underneath her. Throughout all of this activity, she remains calm and attentive to the needs of each of her unhatched chicks. Once all of them have hatched, the hungry mother and her brood search for food and water—ready to explore the world.



COMPASSIONATE CHOICES

Before reading this pamphlet, you probably didn’t realize the fate of chicks used in hatching projects. Now that you know the facts please choose activities that teach compassion as well as biology.

Field Trips – a wonderful way for children to observe birds in their natural environment. Students may witness nest-making activity. If a pond is close by, serial trips afford students the opportunity to see ducks or geese as they sit on nests until the ducklings or goslings emerge. They can then observe the young birds as they develop into adults. Free advice and information about direct observation programs can be obtained from Cornell Lab of Ornithology/PFW:ED, 159 Sapsucker Woods Rd, Ithaca, NY 14850-1999; 607-254-2440

Chick Development Poster (\$9.95) – This 24” x 36” chart illustrates changes during the 21-day

development of the embryo. (Item #BA-57-5109) Carolina Biological Supply Company: 800-334-5551

How a Chick Hatches (3-poster set \$6.95) – Each 17” x 22” poster uses simple language to explain the cycle of life, growth, and transformation of a chick, a tadpole, and a caterpillar. (Item #LC643) Lakeshore: 800-421-5354

Chick Embryonic Development K-12 (\$45) – This set of 20 overhead transparencies shows stages of embryonic development from 16 hours to 21 days. Carolina Biological Supply Company: 800-334-5551

Egg: A Photographic Story of Hatching K-12 (\$13.95) – This book contains photographs of the development of chickens, ducklings, ostriches, reptiles, fish, and insects. It shows how animals breathe inside eggs, how chicks communicate while in their shells, and how caterpillars emerge larger than the shells that held them. Close-up photographs show hatching from the first crack in the shell to the chick breaking free. Dorling Kindersley 800-352-6651. Two or more books are available for \$10.95 per book from Houghton Mifflin: 800-733-2828.

The Egg K-4 (\$11.95) – This is a spiral-bound book with transparencies that show the various stages of a developing chick. Three or more books are available for \$8.96 each from Scholastic: 800-724-6527

Chicken and Egg K-4 (\$3.95) – This soft-cover book contains illustrations and color photographs to show the development of a chick from fertilization to birth. Hens and roosters are shown as parents. Bold headings and simple language are used for very young children and detailed information is provided for older students. (Item #521CE) This book is also part of a set (Item #SB521) that contains the development of a caterpillar, bee, bean plant, and tadpole. Lakeshore: 800-421-5354

For more information, please contact:

Animal Protection League of NJ
PO Box 174, Englishtown, NJ 07726
732-446-6808

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School Chick- Hatching Projects

These projects are not all they’re cracked up to be. Learn what happens to the chicks and find out what tools are available to teach biology without sacrificing compassion.



WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THEM, MOMMY?

Katie Andrews came home from school in early March with tears in her eyes. She told her mother that her class witnessed the birth of the last chick who was part of a hatching project. Katie asked Ms. Dickson, her teacher, what would happen to all the chicks now that they had hatched. Her teacher said the chicks would go back to the farm to be with their mother. Katie asked her mother if that was true. Mrs. Andrews tried to comfort her daughter and promised to speak to Ms. Dickson.



The following day, Mrs. Andrews spoke with Ms. Dickson and learned that more than 500 eggs were delivered throughout Katie's school district. When asked if she knew what would become of the chicks, Ms. Dickson said she didn't know for certain but that they would be returned to the farm that supplied the eggs. She admitted that she told the children otherwise because she didn't want to upset them.

Mrs. Andrews was given the name of the farmer who supplied the eggs. She asked about the fate of the chicks and immediately began to unravel the truth behind chick-hatching projects. She learned from the farmer that most of the chicks would probably die. Surviving females would be used in egg production and males would be killed because they do not produce eggs. Mrs. Andrews, knowing the dismal life in store for chickens used to produce eggs, decided to buy the chicks and find homes for them. Nothing could have prepared her for what she saw when she picked them up.

COLD AND ALONE

Upon arrival at the farm, Mrs. Andrews was taken to a shed that was heated with one heat lamp—insufficient for the cold and damp of early March. There was no maternal comfort and no food in the shed. There was some water but it was murky. When Mrs. Andrews asked about the conditions,

the farmer told her that once she agreed to buy the chicks, he decided not to spend money on someone's else property! Mrs. Andrews looked at the chicks and said she was expecting to see more. He said about half had died since the school returned them. Mrs. Andrews expressed surprise, but the farmer said that was not unusual.

The chicks were quickly gathered up but prior to leaving the farm Mrs. Andrews and the others looked at the chickens who were in a nearby barn. Small cages, containing four to five chickens, were packed floor to ceiling throughout the barn. The stench from the cages was overwhelming and chickens were frantic as they tried to stretch but had no room. This was the fate that would have awaited the chicks rescued by Mrs. Andrews.

ISOLATED EPISODE?

The above describes the experiences of a seven-year-old girl and her mother. Although the details may differ, the facts are the same for almost every chick who is part of a hatching project.

Fertilized eggs are brought into classrooms to hatch within three to four weeks. Rather than experiencing the warmth of a mother, eggs are placed in incubators where they are unlikely to be rotated. The result is that organs stick to the sides of the shells and chicks may be born with their intestines outside their bodies. If eggs hatch when school is not in session, no one is there to care for them. If the heat is turned off, the chicks may become crippled or die in the shell. Those who survive this unnatural beginning fare no better for the remainder of their lives.

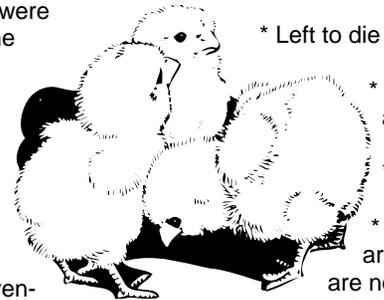


Children naturally develop a bond with animals, especially those whom they have witnessed being born. Because of this, children are told, and some teachers mistakenly believe, that the chicks will live out their lives on a farm. There may be an isolated instance in which this is true, but it is extremely rare. Unless you personally know where chicks are taken and witness their lives afterward, reality may be very different from what teachers tell students.

GRIM REALITY

Most chicks who are part of hatching projects suffer one of these fates:

* Returned to the farms that supplied the eggs—it is unusual for working farms to assimilate school-project birds into their existing flocks. If they do, females are used for egg production. Once their production wanes, they are killed. Males are killed outright because they cannot lay eggs.



* Left to die

* Sold to live poultry markets and auctions

* Fed to captive wild animals

* Chicks brought to animal shelters are routinely killed because there are not enough good homes for chickens, especially roosters.

WHAT CHILDREN LEARN

By witnessing the incubation process and egg hatching, children view animals in a mechanistic way—brought to life by a machine without the need of a mother or family structure. Even if supplemental information is provided, it is unlikely that children can grasp the complexity of the bond between the mother hen and her chicks. While teachers hope to expose children to the miracle of life, what they unwittingly teach is that life is expendable. How far does this lesson extend? To other animals? To humans?

WHAT CHILDREN DON'T LEARN

When children are exposed to classroom hatching projects, they see eggs in a closed, harsh environment. They don't see a patient mother hen who dedicates herself to her unborn chicks during their incubation period. Using her body, feet, and beak, she turns each egg as many as 30 times a day so that each chick will receive the proper temperature, moisture, ventilation, humidity, and

