

## Re: Need advice on breeding/raising chicks

---

*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.agriculture.poultry/2006-06/msg00168.html>

---

- *From:* [fowls@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:fowls@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx) (nuele mersch)
  - *Date:* Sat, 17 Jun 2006 09:52:28 +0200
- 

<jplasater@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

Thank you so much for that very detailed answer. It was just what we needed. Now, can I ask a few follow up questions?

1. We have two golf balls in our nest. Do you think putting about five golf balls in the nest will work? Presently all three hens are laying every day in the nest with two golf balls.

Hens are individuals, and it is impossible to predict whether one will get broody at all, or whether she'll have such a strong instinct that it is nearly impossible to stop her from sitting (I tend to struggle with the latter type ;-)

Some hens will not sit even with thirty eggs in their nest box, and others will get broody even if you take out every egg as soon as it is laid, and sit on nothing. Each hen seems to have her own "program", some sit after they've laid a dozen eggs, others will lay for months and not get broody.

That being said, I still believe that if you present a hen with an ideal environment for hatching chicks, it will make it more likely she'll get broody \*if\* she has the broody genes at all. In my experience, taking out all the eggs constantly does slow down mine a bit, and the unwanted broodiness comes a bit later. If a hen does not find a nice, dark and quiet spot for sitting it is likely that she won't sit even if she is the broody type of bird.

The ideal conditions, IMO, are:

- a dark spot
- quiet, safe, peaceful, undisturbed by other chickens, rats, cats, humans
- nesting material in it
- good food (high in protein)
- she must have laid eggs for a while already
- a clutch of (fake) eggs that gives her the impression her eggs are still there and the nest is safe and undisturbed. So yes, I would think

Re: Need advice on breeding/raising chicks

five golf balls are better than two.

2. How long is it likely for one of the hens to get broody?

I've had hens go broody in their first year and never again. I've had hens not go broody for years and then suddenly when they got older. I've had hens sit several times every year. As I said, they are individuals. Nothing but wait and see, I'm afraid.

How long  
can we store the eggs in the dry cool place before they will spoil and not be either edible or good for producing chicks?

Hatching eggs are best if they are not older than 14 days. Mark the laying date on them with a pencil as you take them out. Store them in an egg carton and make it stand almost upright against the wall. Turn it at least twice daily at an angle of 45°. Take out eggs older than two weeks and use them in the kitchen.

I do this with all my Sicilians eggs now. I started in September when we first had the outdoor ban, and I'll keep doing it as long as they will lay. This way, I'll always have good hatching eggs no matter what happens.

3. We keep our house at about 78 degrees and the relative humidity is about 50%. Is that dry and cool enough?

Blimey, 78 degrees ;-)  
<we do Celsiuses here so it sounds boiling hot to me>

4. When one of the hens gets broody, do we only place under her the eggs she laid or can we put eggs from other hens too?

Any eggs you want. You could also buy some hatching eggs from a nice breed you like.

Re: Need advice on breeding/raising chicks

5. How many eggs should we put under the hen?

Well, they say that an odd number is best. I would think nine to eleven would be a good clutch according to the size of the hen. She must be able to cover them all easily, so that the outer ones don't cool down.

Keep the hens wormed regularly. If one gets broody make sure she is undisturbed. You don't need to put her in a different spot if you can make sure the others don't disturb her, by shutting up her nest box for example. Others have put a cage over her in the corner where the nest was.

Remember to buy chick crumbs before the chicks hatch. If you can get crumbs with a coccidiostat then so much the better. Chicks also need to be able to drink fresh water at all times.

And like Molly said, think about what you are going to do with all the cockerels.

Good luck

Nuele (D)

.