

#### 4. Baby chicks 4-5 weeks old

As they mature, chicks naturally establish a “pecking order” which determines each chick’s social position in the flock. Their place in the order will determine who eats and drinks first and ultimately who “rules the roost”. Although establishment of a pecking order is normal behavior, you should be watchful for excessive pecking in chicks as it may indicate a more serious problem, cannibalism. This is when birds peck the feathers and other body parts of other birds and if allowed to get out of hand, can lead to bleeding, open sores and even death.



Cannibalism can occur at any age and needs to be controlled as soon as it rears its ugly head. It is costly and can spread through a flock rapidly if left unchecked. Cannibalism is usually the result of stress, which can be caused by poor management. Some of these stressors may include crowding, excessive heat, bright lighting, noise, hunger, thirst, the presence of sick or injured chicks, parasites, or other stress factors. Providing the correct living environment in terms of these factors will help reduce the potential for cannibalism from occurring in your flock.

#### Things to do for your chicks this week

Your chicks require less heat as time goes by and they grow larger and more able to regulate their body temperature. Continue reducing the temperature each week to keep them comfortable to a minimum of 65°F. Continue providing clean fresh water each day and providing unlimited Grow® feed in their feeders.

As your chicks grow, adjust the height of the feeders and waterers. A good rule of thumb is to keep them adjusted to the birds’ back height while standing. This will help to keep litter out of feeders and waterers, as well as curious chicks. Around 4 weeks of age, ducklings and goslings will thoroughly enjoy the addition of a swimming area. Be sure if you provide this to keep any resulting wet litter cleaned up. Because of their water-loving, messy nature, it is best to separate ducklings and goslings from chicks. Put rocks in the water so ducks can get in and out of the swimming area.

#### Tips to grow on

Maintain good sanitation practices to reduce the chance of disease. Bigger chicks make bigger messes, so be sure to keep up. As the chicks grow, make sure they have sufficient space to prevent crowding. Additional feeders and waterers may need to be added now to allow adequate space for all chicks to eat and drink at the same time. Keep a close eye on your chicks for signs of possible health issues. Chicks that are sick may appear droopy or listless, have diarrhea or be unwilling to eat.

#### Looking ahead

Your chicks will soon be mature enough to leave the brooder and move into more permanent living quarters, the chicken coop. If you don’t have one ready, now is a good time to start looking into getting one and preparing it for new occupants. You’ll be surprised at how fast your chicks will grow and how quickly moving day will arrive. Many types of poultry housing are available for purchase or you can venture to build your own. Whatever you decide, make sure that the house you choose is ventilated, predator proof and provides protection from extreme temperatures, wind and rain.

Bay Hay and Feed has some demo coops out back to look at. They are completely covered using the deep litter method.