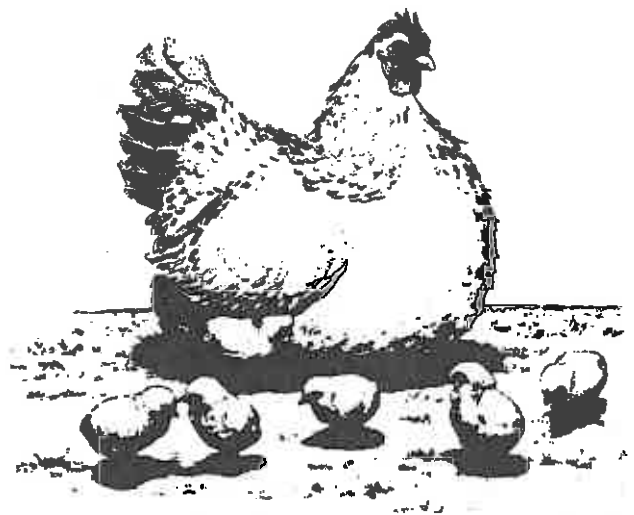


# Brooding Unit for Small Numbers of Birds

E. A. Schano

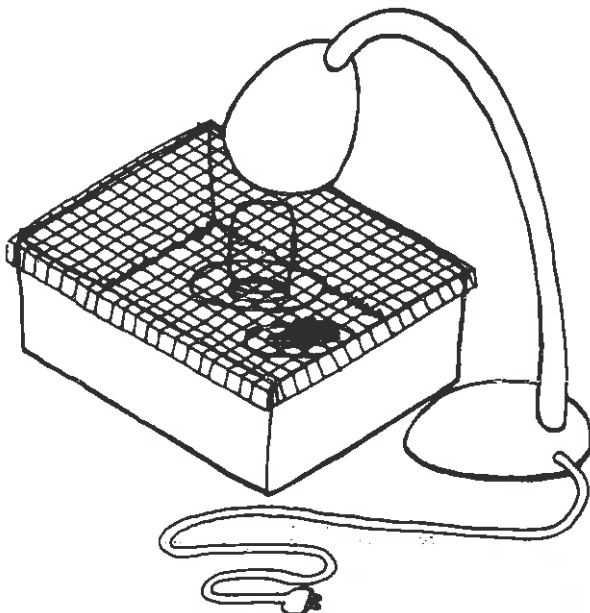


## Objective

To protect, nourish, and provide comfort for 1- to 10-day-old chickens for 10 days, or 1- to 10-day-old quail to maturity.

## Materials

- One cardboard box approximately 28 inches long × 25 inches wide × 14 inches high
- One goosenecked lamp with 60- to 75- watt bulb or other appropriate apparatus for keeping chicks warm
- One water fountain
- Pebbles, marbles, or ¼" screen
- One feed tray
- A welded-wire cover
- Shavings, straw, peat moss, or other appropriate litter material



## Procedure

For those who want to raise a few chicks for a short period of time, here is a simple brooding unit. The principles of brooding are the same regardless of the number of chicks in the flock. Whether there is 1 chick in the brooding unit or 1,000, they have to be kept warm, well fed and watered, protected from predators and dampness, and provided with plenty of fresh air without being exposed to drafts. This unit, when used in a warm place such as the home or school, will work well.

Here you see the cardboard box that is to be the home, the brooder house, for the chicks. The size and shape are not important as long as it is big enough to properly house the chicks and the equipment needed to take care of them.

The goosenecked lamp provides the heat. A 60- or 75-watt bulb normally provides enough warmth. The neck of the lamp can be bent to move the bulb, the source of heat, closer to the chicks if they are cold, or straightened to move it farther away if the chicks are too warm. If the side of the box is very high, a slit can be made in the box so that the base of the lamp can be placed outside while the goose neck of the lamp fits in the slit and the lamp shade is inside the box.

When chicks are cold, they huddle together and "cheep" plaintively. When they are too warm, they stand with wings partially outspread, beak open, throat rapidly pulsating and, in essence, pant like a dog.

The walls of the box serve as a chick guard and keep drafts off the chicks.

Notice the 2 to 3 inches of litter. This serves as insulation and as an absorptive material. Materials such as peat moss, shavings, or straw can be used. Torn strips of newspaper are probably the cheapest and best litter you can use. Never place birds, especially young birds, on a smooth surface. They cannot grip a slippery surface, and their legs tend to go out to the side. This disjoints the legs at the acetabulum and cripples the chicks. This condition is commonly called "spraddle leg."

Each unit should contain at least one waterer and one feeder. Place the waterer on a wooden block or stand to help keep the litter out of the water. *Important:* Place pebbles, marbles, or a screen in the water dish so that quail cannot get wet. They should be able to get their beaks in the water and that's all. Feed can be obtained at the local feed store. Chickens should be fed chick starter; quail should be fed game starter or turkey mash. If these are not available, some of the newer high protein, vitamin, and mineral cereals for human consumption may be satisfactory. Feed and water chicks as soon as they are transferred from the incubator to the brooder.

Finally, after the chicks have been put in the brooding unit, cover it with a welded-wire screen. This will keep the chicks in and predators, such as cats and dogs, out. The illustration shows a 1" x 1" welded-wire screen. Other sizes from 1/4" x 1/4" to 1" x 4" mesh can be used.

If you do all these things, you will have a comfortable home for your baby chicks. Now you must follow through to be sure that they are kept warm and well fed. This means checking the feeders, waterers, and the brooder unit each morning before you catch the school bus, checking them again when you get home from school and again just before you go to bed. When not in school, check them early morning, midday, and late evening.

Each time you get yourself a jelly sandwich, a glass of milk, or feel that the house is either too warm or too cold, you should think of your chicks. In this way you will have some of the healthiest, happiest, and best chicks in your area and the inner satisfaction that comes from doing a good job.

This unit is useful for classroom and club studies, for home use, and for anyone wanting to brood a few chicks like those in the Incubation and Embryology and in the Standard Breeders' projects.

For more information see

Leaders' Guides L-8-3a, *Brooding Chicks*

L-8-3b, *Recommendations for Brooding  
and Rearing Chicks*

Project Record R-8-3, *Brooding, Rearing, and Broiler  
Growing Record*

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