



PRE-INCUBATION CHECKLIST!

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Egg incubation checklist

Got your fertile eggs? YAY! You're about to have an eggcellent time!

Your eggs need to settle for at least 24 hours if they came via shipping or have just been freshly collected.

Store eggs pointy end down in a cool environment, turning once to three times a day while they are awaiting incubation. This allows the CO₂ levels to go back to normal and hopefully if you've had shipped eggs you've got no dislodged air sacks. (If you're using a manual turn incubator now is the time to mark your eggs with a pencil, Mark one side of the eggs with an 'x' on one side and an 'o' will indicate turning position. Then hopefully when you go to turn again they all match.)

After seven days eggs are getting too old for a successful hatch. (Refer to our 'Fertile Egg Quality / Storage Guide' for more information)

Is the incubator ready?

Ensure the incubator is clean and dry this is one of the most important job during your egg incubation checklist as it will help you have healthier birds and avoid losses.

Position the incubator so that it does not have to be moved during the course of the incubation period.

Ensure the incubator is not exposed to direct sunlight, draughts, or disturbance from pets or children.

Run the incubator and ensure the temperature reaches the required setting and **remains stable**.

Fill the water reservoir and check the humidity reaches the required level and remains constant.

Check the correct function of your thermometer and place it at the same level as the eggs.

Monitor incubator carefully before setting eggs for incubation.



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Is your thermometer accurate?

- Place the thermometer in the incubator at egg height (not on the floor of the incubator) in order to get accurate measurements during the egg incubation checklist.
- Run your incubator without eggs to check that your thermometers are accurate or which ones are similar for use.
- Place your thermometer inside the incubator to ensure a consistent temperature. Ensure the thermometer is in good order (without gaps in the spirit or calibrated if digital).
- Each time you pass the incubator, keep a note of the temperature or other observations during the incubation period. As you learn you'll have these notes to look back on.

How do I check humidity?

- Humidity is important in the incubator as humidity allows the correct respiration of the egg. Knowing and trusting incubator humidity is a start, but is only one factor affecting what's really important – successful embryo development and hatching.
- If the humidity is too high or too low then the chick can grow all the way up to the hatch and then die or get stuck in the shell.
- Average humidity is usually what matters most, so high or low humidity for a day is not significant if the overall average is correct.

TIP: when adjusting the humidity in a digital incubator wait about 2 hours before taking a reading.

- Humidity can be measured using a **Wet-bulb Thermometer** with chart – accurate however it requires a clean tube with constant water and well placed, absorbing wick
- Hygrometer & Humidity Logger** – dependant on batteries, accuracy, and calibration.

Learning how to read the egg is the single most important thing you can learn about humidity.



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Egg weight (moisture loss)

Measure and chart a sample of your egg weights, against incubation days (preferably at the same time of day), then check that the weight loss is tracking well (13-15% loss during incubation), or against previous successful recorded batches. This gets more useful the more you do it.

Storage conditions can affect the moisture loss rate as will the type of egg (shell thickness, porosity, genetics, and the parent hen's diet), ventilation (moving air increases drying) and egg washing (removal of the 'bloom' increases moisture loss) as well as the season (if you are doing things the same way in July as you were in January, you have to expect different results due to the outside humidity).

Air cell size (explained further in the Candling Guide)

Candling focuses on the chick and air cell development in the egg. Use the candling guide and observe the air cell development in your setting eggs to determine if your eggs, from your flock, at your location, in your incubator, have the correct humidity settings that you know work.

If using the two methods above to check humidity, have accurate weight scales and a strong, single LED focused candler that has fresh batteries, along with paper and pencils near your incubator.

Truly focusing on chick development, rather than incubator humidity, is both relevant and reliable.

How long will it take?

The incubation period for chicken eggs is 21 days.

Turn your eggs at least twice a day for the first 18 days, and stop turning after the 18th day. This allows the chick time to orient itself inside the egg before pipping.

Refer to our pre-entered hatching guides for individual species requirements.