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Raising 4-H Fryers or Roasters



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Raising 4-H Fryers o

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It's fun to raise chickens. You can have fun and earn money, too, by brooding and raising chicks for meat. You can buy baby chicks of several meat-type breeds or crosses at a reasonable cost from local hatcheries.

Fryers sold at 3 to 3½ pounds in weight usually return the most profit. There are, however, exceptions to this rule.

Fryers are young chickens (usually under 12 weeks of age) of either sex, that are tender meated with soft, pliable, smooth-textured skin and flexible breastbone cartilage.

Roasters are young chickens of either sex weighing over 4 pounds each.

Getting prepared to brood one or more lots of chicks needn't take much time or money. Almost every farm and rural home has a place which can be fixed up to brood twenty-five to a hundred chicks without building a separate brooder house. Anyone who can use a hammer and a saw can make feeders, fountains, and other equipment. See 4-H Circular No. 64, Construction of Poultry Equipment. This homemade equipment can be just about as good as any you can buy.

The number of chicks brooded and raised for fryers or roasters should be small enough for you to do a good job and yet large enough to offer a challenge and profit.

Roasters



How to Get Started

Are your parents interested? If so, talk the situation and problems over with them, and then get together with your 4-H leader. Decide where you will buy the chicks, where you will brood them, and how you will sell them when they are raised.

1. Buy day-old chicks from a local hatcheryman whose stock has a good reputation in your community. You don't have to ship chicks in from long distances to get high quality chicks.

2. Buy chicks from rapid-growing, fast-feathering stock that has been pullorum-tested and all the reactors removed.

3. New Hampshires, Barred and White Plymouth Rocks or crosses of these or other breeds are good for fryer or roaster production.

Brooding

Brooding Quarters

1. Fryers are usually raised indoors. Allow at least 1 square foot of floor space for each chick.

2. Most fryers are raised on the floor which has been covered with clean, dry litter.

3. Clean the house and equipment at least 2 weeks before your chicks are scheduled to arrive. Proper cleaning requires scraping, washing, and then disinfecting with any coal-tar disinfectant.

4. With dirt floors, take off the top 6 inches of soil after each brood. Replace it with fresh sand on which chickens have not run. Sand is better than dirt.

5. Be sure the quarters are good and dry before any litter is put on the floor. The building should be free from drafts, rat-proof, with the corners rounded to keep chicks from crowding.

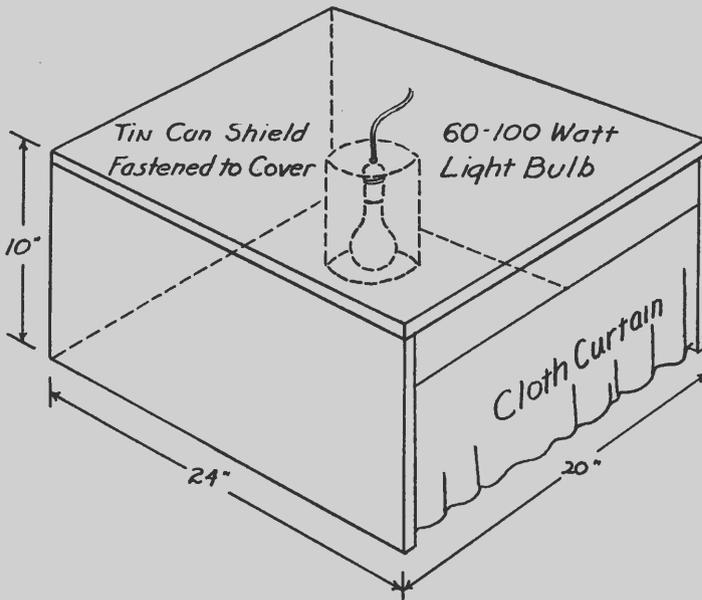
6. Chickens need air, just as you do. Give them plenty, but avoid drafts.

Brooders

1. If your brooder is to work right, you must take good care of it. Electric, coal, oil and gas are the most common types of brooders.

2. You can use electric heat lamps for brooding 25 to 50 chicks quite reasonably.

Simple Light Bulb Brooder for 25 to 50 Chicks



3. You can make a good brooder for twenty-five to fifty chicks using a light bulb for heat at almost no cost. It is a box with a 60-watt light bulb hanging through the cover. It is shielded by a tin can, open at the bottom. This box is about 25 inches long, 20 inches wide, and 10 inches high, with a cloth curtain at one end. The sides and one end sit on the floor. The chicks go in and come out through the cloth curtain at the end. This brooder is used indoors and should sit right on the floor. Cover the floor with litter. There is no automatic adjustment of temperature, so you need to watch the actions of the chicks closely to see whether they are too hot or too cold. If they are too hot, you can lift the cloth curtain on the front. If they are too cold, move the brooder to a warmer place or put in a larger light bulb. Check the temperature with a thermometer once in a while. Each night check the comfort of your chicks.

4. Be sure to try out the brooder 2 days before the chicks arrive.

5. For complete information about brooders and brooding equipment, get a copy of Poultry Pointers No. 22, *Brooding and Brooding Equipment for Chicks*, from your County Extension Office. It also shows how to build mash hoppers from wood for different-aged chicks.

Care and Feeding of Chicks

1. Keep your chicks comfortable at all times by starting brooder temperature about 95° F. 2 inches from the floor, and lowering about 5 degrees each week. If you buy a brooder, follow the directions that come with it. Chicks hatched before June 1 may need heat until they are about 8 weeks of age.

2. Use dry, clean, mold-free litter, such as cut straw, wood shavings, peat moss, or sand. Stir the litter occasionally and change it if it becomes wet or badly packed.

3. Place a hover guard made of boards or cardboard around the brooder about 2 feet from the hover. Keep it there for several days until the chicks learn where to find the heat.

4. Feed your chicks as soon as they are put under the hover. It is best to buy a good commercial broiler or chick starter feed for the chicks. Place the chick feeders so one end is slightly under the brooder.



A younger brother likes to feed his older brother's 4-H birds.

5. Give them plenty of feeder and drinking space. One-half of the chicks should be able to eat at one time. Poultry Pointers No. 35, *Broiler and Fryer Production in Washington*, tells how much room to have for each bird.

6. Do not crowd the chicks. Crowding is one of the worst things you can do to chicks. Each one needs 1 square foot of floor space.

7. Clean, sanitary conditions are important, because the chicks are kept in the brooding houses the entire growing period.

8. If chicks start picking each other, darken the room by putting something over the windows. It should let in as much cool, fresh air as possible without chilling them. Poultry Pointers No. 12, *Cannibalism in Chickens*, has other suggestions.

9. To learn more about feeding and taking care of your birds, get a copy of Poultry Pointers No. 35, *Broiler and Fryer Production in Washington*, from your County Extension Office or leader.

10. Two important tables in Poultry Pointers No. 35 you should have are:

- a. Average weights of growing chicks from 4 to 14 weeks.
- b. Average pounds of feed (mash and grain) eaten by growing chicks from 4 to 14 weeks.

11. Coccidiosis is a common disease. To prevent it use a ration containing a good coccidiostat. Poultry Pointers No. 6, *Coccidiosis in Chickens and Turkeys*, is a good reference to have on hand.

12. Ask your county agent for the latest information on the control of respiratory diseases.

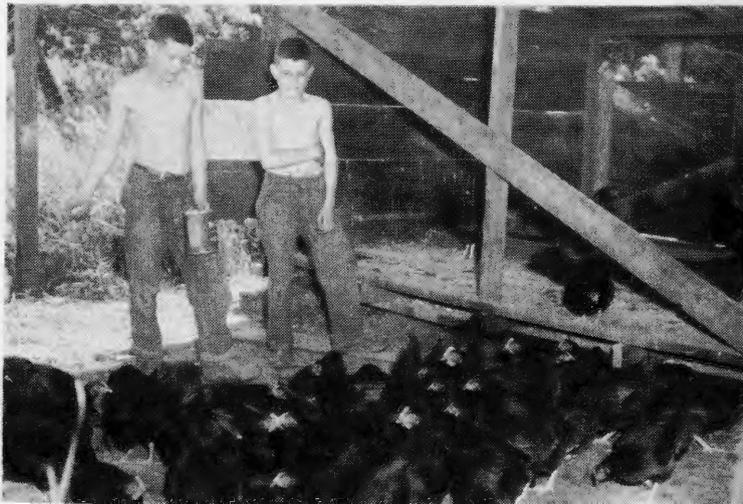
Roasters

If you want to raise roasters, select fryers around 12 to 14 weeks old. The largest, heaviest birds are the best ones to continue growing out as roasters. Be sure the birds do not have breast blisters or crooked breasts. Feed them a good fryer finishing mash, containing a coccidiostat, until they weigh 5 to 6 pounds and are still under 36 weeks of age. See that the males do not become staggy (too old) or show signs of beginning to lose weight.

Marketing the Fryer or Roaster

1. To help the home meat supply, sell as many as possible to your parents at the market price.
2. The most common and easiest way to sell them is live weight. You can usually make more money this way, but sometimes pan-ready fryers are easier to sell.
3. Be sure that fryers sold live weight are well feathered and within the weights of chickens for which the highest price is being paid. Usually this is between $2\frac{3}{4}$ to 4 pounds.
4. USDA Farmers Bulletin No. 1377, *Marketing Poultry*, tells a lot about this subject. It tells how to kill and dress poultry.
5. Be sure that roasters are in the best market condition when you sell them.

These 4-H members take good care of their birds.



In your poultry project you should:

1. Keep a 4-H poultry record book and turn it in to your leader when he asks for it.
2. Do your own work, follow instructions, and attend club meetings.
3. Attend any community poultry judging school, fairs, or judging contests.
4. If you can arrange it, take your birds to a commercial killing plant and observe how they are dressed for market. Then follow some dressed birds from the killing plant to the store to observe marketing methods.

Cost of Raising A Fryer

Feed (10 pounds at 5 cents)	50 cents
Chick	17 cents
Brooder fuel	1 cent
Miscellaneous (litter and vaccine)	3 cents
Depreciation	4 cents
Interest	2 cents
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Total	77 cents

The cost of raising a roaster will be the same as above plus the additional feed worth about 50 cents.