

Questions Most Often Asked By Students

1. Can two chicks hatch from one egg?

Yes. It is a rare occurrence. When two chicks hatch from the same egg, the egg usually has two yolks. The development of twin chicks from single-yolked eggs is very infrequent, and when it does occur, the single yolk has two blastoderms (fertilized germs). We have no knowledge of Siamese twin chicks ever being hatched.

2. What is a double-yolked egg?

It is an egg that has two yolks in it. Both yolks were ovulated (released) at or about the same time and enclosed in the same shell. Many eggs with double yolks occur when young adult female chickens first start producing eggs. Their egg-forming organs are not adjusted or not yet synchronized, so two yolks are released together. Shortly after egg production starts, the chickens' bodies adjust, and for the most part, they then lay eggs with only one yolk. But, there are some chickens which inherit the characteristic to lay double-yolked eggs and continue to do so throughout their life.

3. If a female chicken is hatched with about 4,000 ova and lays only 240 to 250 eggs a year, what happens to the remainder of the ova?

Depending on the state of health and condition of the chicken, they can continue to exist in the hen's body ready to form a yolk or they can be absorbed by the hen's body.

4. Can I hatch the eggs I buy at the store?

No. The eggs in grocery stores are infertile and will not hatch.

5. If a mother hen sits on a fertile egg, will it always hatch? If not, what does she do with it?

Not all fertile eggs will hatch even when incubated either by a broody hen or in an incubator. Under some conditions they will contain weak or defective embryos. Hatchability is influenced by (1) age of eggs at setting, (2) conditions under which they were held before incubation, (3) parent stock, including its breeding potential, health and diet, and (4) conditions while the eggs are being incubated. So, the fact that a hen is doing the incubating does not guarantee that a fertile egg will hatch. If an egg or eggs do not hatch, the hen eventually leaves them and the nest. She leaves because the hormone that caused her to go broody is no longer secreted, so she stops setting on the eggs. In a way, it could be said that nature has told her to quit the nest.

6. How long can the mother hen be off the nest during the day? What will happen if she stays off too long?

A setting hen can be off the nest 15 to 20 minutes or a little longer at one time without harming the embryos, unless the weather is extremely cold. If she remains off too long, the embryos will be chilled too much. Then, some of the chicks may be weakened, and some of the embryos will die and not hatch.

7. If an embryo dies during incubation, does it feel pain?

In most cases, no. The embryo just sort of goes to sleep. In the case of severe jolting, extreme heat or cold, or similar causes of death, the embryo might experience some discomfort.

8. Why does the eye get so big; and why does it grow so fast?

We do not have the exact answer to this. However, it is possible that both size of the eye and speed of its growth could be at least partially due to the eye being so very complex and so important. This considerable time is needed to completely form and develop it.

9. Why does the heart grow on the outside of the body at first?

We do not know why it does so. It is known that the heart helps to circulate blood both in the embryo's circulatory system and in the membranes outside the embryo that carry food to the embryo as it develops.

10. If you break open the shell, say on the 8th or 9th day, how long can the embryo live?

The length of time it will live varies with the conditions around it, such as temperature. It is not likely to live more than 5 to 10 minutes in most instances. It is possible to remove the shell at the large end of the egg, replace it with a plastic cap, continue to incubate the egg and the embryo can then live several days.

11. Can you open the shell for the chick?

Yes, but is not recommended. To do so is frequently painful to the chick. Also, the chick is usually weakened and may die.

12. Can I find the egg tooth and keep it after it falls off?

No. It just sort of "fades" or "melts" away.

13. If I find a bird egg, such as a Robin's, can I hatch it?

It is possible, but you should not because young birds like the Robin require the skilled care of its parents to survive. People cannot provide the same kind of care. The baby bird will most likely die from starvation, cold or mismanagement.

14. Can we hold the chicks as soon as they hatch?

Before the chicks are handled, the hatch should be completed and the chicks should be allowed to dry completely and fluff up.

15. How can you tell if the chick is male or female?

Unless the males and females are different colors, you cannot tell them apart without special training. Trained chick sexors can tell the difference by (1) examining the chick's internal organs or (2) observing the difference in the length of the chick's wing feathers at about one day of age.

16. Can I take the chicks home? If my uncle owns a farm? If I move to a farm?

No. You should not take the chicks home unless your family or some relatives live on a farm and have the proper equipment and buildings and the knowledge to care for them appropriately.

17. Are you going to kill the chicks when you take them from the class?

No. A farmer will take them and care for them.

18. How long after a chick hatches does it become an adult?

Those chickens raised for egg production need to develop for about five months. Those raised for meat take longer — about six months.

19. How long do chickens live?

Broilers reach market age in six to eight weeks. On most commercial egg farms, laying hens have completed their usefulness when they are 18 to 20 months old. Records show that when chickens are allowed to live out their lives naturally, many of them will live in the range of six to ten years. Some claims have been made of some chickens living as long as 22 years.



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