

The optimal start: select chicks from a hatchery providing early feeding

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Intro to Good Practice

In a commercial hatchery, broiler chicks hatch within a period of 24-48 hours in an incubator. During this time, no water or feed is available to the chicks that hatch first. Only once the hatching phase is over, all of the hatched chicks are removed from the incubator and transported to the barns for rearing within a maximum period of 72 hours. The Animal Welfare Transport Ordinance does not count the time from the first hatched chick until placement in the barn for the 72 hours time-window, but only the time from when all the chicks are taken out of the incubator. It is thus very common that more than 72

hours have passed from the time of the first hatching in the incubator to the first possibility to feed on-farm. In fact, the "first hatchlings" that have already been in the incubator for 3 days may suffer from food and water deprivation while they await sufficient care. Therefore, the "Hatch-Care" system was developed (Fig. 1). This system offers the newly hatched chicks feed and water while they are still in the incubator at the hatchery. Broiler producers can select such a hatchery for chick supply and benefit from stronger higher-welfare chicks for an optimal start.



Background & challenges

- In general, day-old chicks can largely feed themselves for several hours via the yolk sac reserves (Moran, 2007).
- However, even in the first few hours of life, fast-growing broilers exhibit higher metabolic activity than laying hen lines, which means that the yolk sac reserves are usually already finished after 38 to 50 hours (Bergoug et al., 2013).
- Early post-hatch feeding offers the chicks those resources that are beneficial for their early development in terms of their digestive tract, organs, immune and thermoregulatory systems.
- However, broiler producers are dependent on the hatchery. If they cannot find a hatchery with "Hatch-Care", there is no supply of such chicks.

Figure 1. In the Hatch-Care system, newly-hatched chicks have direct access to space, water, feed, and light to fulfill their needs until they arrive at the farm.



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Additional information

- Chicks that hatched in HatchCare are immediately supplied with the basic necessities of life – feed, fresh water and light. This prevents dehydration and stimulates their growth and development.
- Newly hatched chicks enter a clean, spacious post-hatch HatchCare Basket chicks via one of the many Eggs – its-open spaces in the HatchCare Tray (Fig. 2).
- The HatchCare Basket is free of unhatched eggs and empty shells, hence it provides chicks with about 40% more space than traditional systems.
- In the HatchCare Basket, there are feed troughs on two sides, which contain enough feed for 24-36 hours.
- Drinking gutters in the HatchCare Basket provide a continuous supply of fresh flowing water.
- The chicks remain in the HatchCare Basket until they arrive at the poultry house, so also have access to water and feed during transport.



Source: canadianpoultrymag.com
/hatching-disruption-30351/

Figure 2. The HatchCare Tray has small openings through which newly-hatched chicks fall into the HatchCare Basket, in which they will find water and feed and free space to move around.

Benefits

- Offering feed and water already in the hatchery strengthens the chicks for transportation to the barn. Once in the barn, they can explore their surroundings more quickly as they have more energy.
- Chicks with early feeding have a better weight development, lower mortality rate, and need less or no medication at the start.
- Additional costs for the hatchery are estimated at €0,02 per chick.
- Rearing costs on the farm are estimated at €0.20 per chick per round.
- The farmer estimated a 5% return on sales as benefit, as his birds have a higher end weight.

Farmer experiences

- How long have you been obtaining chicks with the HatchCare system? How did you get in contact with the hatchery?
 - Since 2016
 - Contact to the hatchery was established by the processor
 - There are a total of 3 hatcheries that use the HatchCare system
- Are the animals delivered in the HatchCare baskets and sorted in the hatchery and then transported?
 - Yes, the unsorted animals are delivered in the baskets where the feed is located
 - The egg tray can be removed
- Are there any special preparation steps before the day-old chicks are delivered?
 - No, chick management is the same as for conventional hatching methods



Find out the details of the HatchCare system in the brochure accessible via the QR code or check out the website: www.hatchtech.com/hatchery-products/hatchcare/
Or watch a video of the hatching process: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TCU_pwH9Hs

¹ Moran, 2007, ² Bergoug et al., 2013

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