

Route 99 Silkies

Quick Start Chick Care Guide

Thank you for choosing Route 99 to be your trusted silkie breeder! We are excited to welcome you to the Route 99 family! Whether you are a first-time chick parent or an experienced poultry keeper, this guide will provide you with essential tips and information to ensure your new chicks grow up healthy and happy.

Your Quick Start Chick Care Guide

Housing Your Chicks

Start with the Right Container: Choose a secure, spacious container like a plastic tote or sturdy box to house your chicks comfortably.

Add the Liner: Use pine shavings or paper towels to line the bottom for cleanliness and comfort—avoid using cedar, as it's harmful.

Ramp up the Heat: Maintain a temperature of 95°F (35°C) during the first week with a heat lamp or brooder plate, ensuring one side remains cooler. For each subsequent week, you can lower the temperature by 5 degrees until the chicks are 6 weeks old.

Ventilation is Key: Ensure proper airflow to keep the space fresh, while protecting the brooder from drafts.

Focus on Safety: Secure the setup with a pet-proof cover and position the heat source to avoid overheating or fire risks.

Feeding Your Chicks

Starter Feed: Provide a high-quality chick starter feed (non-medicated) formulated for their nutritional needs during the first 6–8 weeks.

Fresh Water: Ensure they always have access to clean, fresh water. Use a shallow waterer to prevent drowning or spills.

Frequency: Keep feed available at all times; chicks eat frequently and need constant access to food.

Avoid Treats Early On: Stick to their starter feed for the first few weeks to ensure balanced nutrition. Introduce treats gradually if desired.

Grit: If feeding anything besides starter feed, offer chick-sized grit to aid digestion

Health & Hygiene

Clean Brooder Regularly: Remove soiled bedding daily and replace it with fresh bedding to prevent ammonia buildup and reduce the risk of disease.

Monitor Behavior: Watch for signs of illness, such as lethargy, lack of appetite, or droopy posture, and separate any sick chicks from the group immediately.

Keep Feeders and Waterers Clean: Wash and refill feeders and waterers daily to prevent contamination and the growth of bacteria or mold.

Wash Hands: Always wash your hands before and after handling chicks to avoid spreading germs to them or yourself.

Check for Pasty Butt: Inspect chicks regularly for pasty butt—a common condition where droppings stick to their vents, blocking elimination. Clean gently with warm water to avoid complications. Applying Vaseline afterwards will help prevent reoccurrence.

Handling & Socializing	<p>Start Early: Begin handling chicks gently after their first few days to help them get accustomed to human interaction.</p> <p>Be Gentle: Use slow, calm movements to pick them up, supporting their bodies with your hands to make them feel secure.</p> <p>Frequent Interaction: Spend time with them daily—talking softly, letting them explore your hands, or just being present near their brooder.</p> <p>Let Them Approach: Allow chicks to come to you instead of chasing or forcing interaction. This builds trust and reduces stress.</p> <p>Introduce Toys or Obstacles: Provide safe items like perches, mirrors, or small ramps to encourage exploration and interaction with their environment.</p>
Growth Milestones	<p>First Week: Chicks are active and curious. They rely heavily on warmth (95°F) and constant access to starter feed and water.</p> <p>2–3 Weeks: Wing feathers start to grow, and they may attempt short flights or start to jump out of the brooder if it is not covered. Reduce the brooder temperature by 5°F each week.</p> <p>4–5 Weeks: Body feathers begin to replace chick fluff, and they grow more adventurous. They may outgrow their initial brooder.</p> <p>6–8 Weeks: Fully feathered and can tolerate cooler temperatures, making them ready for outdoor transition (weather permitting).</p> <p>12+ Weeks: Chicks develop into pullets (young hens) or cockerels (young roosters) and may start to show their adult behaviors.</p>

Disclaimer

This quick start guide is intended to provide general information and recommendations for chick care. While we have made every effort to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information provided, it is not a substitute for professional veterinary advice. Always consult with a qualified veterinarian or poultry specialist for specific guidance and treatment for your chicks.

Please note that chick care involves risks, and individual results may vary. We do not assume any responsibility or liability for any issues that may arise from following the advice and recommendations in this guide. By using this guide, you agree to do so at your own risk and to hold us harmless from any claims, damages, or losses.

Thank you for choosing us as your chick care partner. We wish you and your chicks the best of luck on this rewarding journey!

Questions? Contact Us!

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