



## Tips on Raising Pheasants

**When You Receive Your Chicks:** Pheasant chicks can be raised the same way as chickens, with a few exceptions. Do not place pheasants on a smooth surface. We suggest that for the first week you grow the chicks on a wire screen surface, preferably with a mesh size of  $\frac{1}{4}$ " x  $\frac{1}{4}$ ". This will allow the chicks to move about safely without getting their feet caught, and provide them with a clean environment as well. If the wire is supported by a 2" x 4" wood frame, droppings will pass through and the chicks will only be able to eat the food you provide for them. Another alternative is to raise the chicks on a rough surface such as a clean piece of burlap or an old, clean towel. This rough surface will provide safe footing and prevent "spraddle leg".

**Chicks should have water always available to them.** We recommend one-gallon chick fountains, available from your feed store. We also recommend adding a vitamin booster to the water in the prescribed amount for the first week of life, which can be done easily using the fountain type of waterer.

**Feed should be available at all times.** A fine turkey crumble starter or pre-starter ration (medicated) works nicely for the first 6 weeks of life.

Heat should be provided by infrared heat lights suspended overhead, no closer than 18" from the floor. White bulbs are too bright and tend to cause early cannibalism. Get a thermometer and position it at chick level. You can start the chicks at 95° F (35° C) for the first week. After the first week, drop the temperature 5° F (2-3° C) per week until they are 4 to 5 weeks old and can be let outside.

Pheasant chicks are relatively easy to raise. All they require is heat to keep warm, light, feed, and water in a clean environment that is free from drafts (young pheasants cannot stand any drafts). Provide these things and you should have success.

**When Your Chicks are 1 Week Old:** Remove the vitamin booster from the drinking water. You may move the chicks off the wire screen and onto the floor. We suggest fresh pine shavings or straw for litter at this age. The chicks can stay on clean litter until they are able to go outside. If possible, reduce light levels to prevent cannibalism (picking). This can be done by using a regular light dimmer on a light bulb. Gradually reduce the light level as the birds get older. Once the birds know where the feed, water and heat are, they do not require bright light. Don't forget they still need warmth. Another way to prevent picking is by giving the birds more space.

**When the Birds are 4 Weeks Old:** At this age, the birds may be allowed to leave your barn, but keep them in an enclosure, or they will fly away. Extra protection may be required on cold, stormy nights. Pheasants will gradually waterproof their feathers after being exposed to the first spring shower. Once feathers are waterproofed, you will be well on your way to trouble-free birds. Picking may occur again at this stage, but can usually be controlled by giving the birds more room or by beak trimming. Providing cedar boughs for the birds to hide under will also help.

**When the Birds are 6 to 18 Weeks Old:** Gradually, over a four-day period, change the starter ration to pelleted turkey grower ration (medicated). Always provide feed and water free choice. Pheasants love green vegetation. If you can provide them with grassy or weedy pens, they will thrive, and it should save you money on feed! Change the diet to turkey finisher (non-medicated) at 14 weeks of age. The birds will reach market weight (3 lbs. dressed weight for cocks, 2 lbs. for hens) at about 18 weeks. Picking during this phase can be controlled by using pheasant specs, or once again by giving more space or trimming the birds' beaks.