

# Transporting & Holding Chicks and Poults

Experienced poultry exhibitors know how important it is for their broiler chicks and turkey poults to have a healthy start if they are to be competitive in the show. Transporting newly-hatched poultry from the hatchery or distribution point to the exhibitor's pen must be done properly to ensure minimal death loss and maximum bird performance. Temperature and ventilation are the two main points for consideration when transporting chicks and poults.

## Temperature

The proper temperature for brooding day-old poultry generally ranges from 88 to 94 degrees F in the pen at home. However, room or vehicle temperatures that high can be lethal for birds in cardboard boxes because the birds inside the box will generate additional body heat. To prevent overheating birds in boxes, the temperature inside the room or vehicle should be approximately normal room temperature, about 72 to 76 degrees F. If the birds get hot, they will start panting, which will add to the heat production. If the chicks are panting, this is an indication that temperatures are too high and adjustments must be made immediately. If the birds get too hot for too long, they can die. Conversely, chicks huddling in box corners indicates the temperature is too low. It is a good idea to check the birds frequently during transport, especially during long distance transport or extended holding periods.

## Ventilation

Hatchlings require oxygen and produce carbon dioxide, so adequate ventilation and air exchange are crucial during transport and holding. Every effort should be made to leave space between stacked boxes to allow fresh air to flow between the stacks to supply oxygen and remove the carbon dioxide. Cardboard boxes can be very restrictive to air flow, and the build-up of carbon dioxide inside the boxes can be deadly to the birds without adequate ventilation. Chick boxes will typically have removable tabs or holes for ventilation. Be sure that an adequate number of vents are open to allow for adequate air exchange. Do not cover boxes with blankets as this will prevent air flow.

Finally, if you observe a distinct change in cheeping sounds or a lack of cheeping from the birds, this may indicate a problem, and you should check the birds immediately.