



Handling Eggs After They Are Laid

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Now that your hens are laying, how will you handle your eggs? Whether the eggs will be hatched or eaten, they should be collected frequently. Eggs that are laid late in the day should be collected and not left for the next day. For optimal hatchability, hatching eggs should be collected at least four times per day. The longer the eggs stay in the nest, the more likely they are to be broken or soiled. Leaving eggs for an extended period will result in pre-incubation of fertile egg which will reduce hatch and chick quality. Leaving table eggs in the nest for extended periods will result in a down grade of these eggs.

Cleaning eggs

Hatching Eggs- If hatching eggs are dirty, remove the debris with a dry cloth. Never use a wet towel or sandpaper. A wet towel can spread disease organisms and sandpaper will remove the protective cuticle of the shell. It is important to note that you should not set dirty eggs as bacteria will penetrate the eggs which can result in dead embryos or can cause “exploding eggs” prior to them hatching.

Table Eggs- You should separate clean eggs from dirty and cracked eggs. You should not sell cracked eggs and should not consume egg that are leaking. Dirty eggs can be washed but it is important to note that the temperature of the water used to wash the eggs should be warmer than the eggs. Table eggs can be wiped off with a clean dry cloth.

Egg Storage

Hatching Eggs- If you intend to hatch the eggs in an artificial incubator, the eggs should be collected and cooled to a temperature that is below the threshold for embryonic development. They can be placed into a refrigerator at a temperature of about 65°F. Eggs can be stored at this temperature for about a week without the hatchability of the eggs seriously impacted. However, after a week, the eggs will begin to lose their ability to hatch for each day held. Of course, if you will be hatching chicks, you will need an artificial incubator. The size you select will depend of the size of the operation. The eggs will remain in the incubator for 21 days. The best incubators will be the ones that will turn the eggs every 90 minutes. The temperature and humidity in the

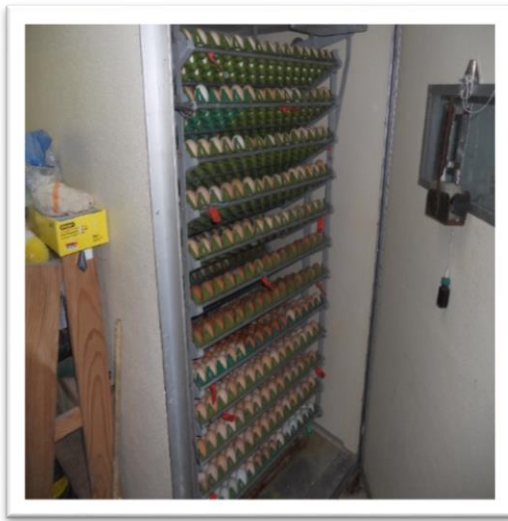
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incubator are very critical. Most incubators come pre-set to 100°F and 85 to 87% humidity. The cost of incubators will depend on the size and complexity of the unit.



Egg Storage



Large Incubator

Table Eggs- these should be refrigerated soon after they are collected and cleaned. Eggs should be stored at a temperature of 50-55°F, this will maintain the eggs for extended periods of time. Eggs which are not stored in a refrigerator will result in the breakdown of the protein structure of the egg as well as the loss of moisture, reducing the grade of the egg. Eggs stored in the home refrigerator will slow down the process of the albumin thinning and yolk thickening. If eggs are stored at the correct temperature, they can be held up to one month without any significant loss in egg quality.