

# Let The Broody Hens Raise The Chicks

A broody hen is a female chicken that sits on a nest of eggs, hatches the eggs, then raises the chicks.



## Types of Chicken Rearing

### Natural Rearing

This is allowing a broody hen to hatch and raise chicks.



A broody hen controls the humidity and warmth of her nest. She will rotate the eggs and remove the ones that are not fertilized. Most incubators manage the humidity and warmth. However, only certain incubators have the rotating function and none have the ability to discern between eggs that are fertilized or not.

### Artificial Rearing

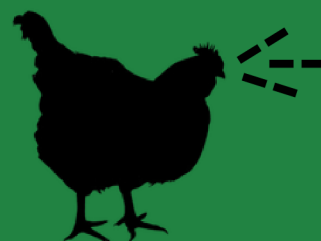
This is raising chicks through an incubator, heating lamp, or heat plate.



## The Effects of Broody Hens on Chicks

### Vocalizations

Broody hens emit many calls to display different messages to their chicks. Feeding calls, alarm calls, roosting calls, and maternal cluck calls are among these. One call means the hen found food, while another means danger is nearby. Broody hens also use various calls to tell their chicks it is time to rest and to build bonds with their chicks. These calls are vital to the well-being and safety of the chicks.



### Feeding Behaviors

Using a feeding call, a broody hen will tell her chicks that she has located food. She demonstrates how to eat and what food to eat. In doing so, she promotes the learning of scratching behaviors. Chicks that learn this principal ability will be fitter as they have the opportunity to consume more food through scratching. The chicks also discover what is prey versus what is indigestible.



### Social Behaviors

Dust bathing and preening are essential behaviors to the overall health and happiness of chickens. Broody hens teach their chicks these behaviors. Chicks participate in these activities in groups, promoting the familial bond between chick siblings and between the chicks and their mother. The presence of a broody hen also lowers aggression levels between chicks.



### Education of Predators

Broody hens implement an alarm call when they see danger around to call their chicks close to them. Through these calls, chicks are taught what animals are dangerous to them. The chicks are less fearful and tense since the responsibility of being on alert is the broody hen's. The very presence of a broody hen is beneficial as they are certainly bigger and stronger than their chicks and are very protective. Therefore, they have more of a likelihood of repelling predators.



Overall, the actions and behaviors of broody hens are beneficial to their chicks. Broody hens positively influence their chicks through vocalizations, feeding behaviors, social behaviors, and the education of predators. These effects are not supplied to the chicks when they are reared artificially. In addition to the positive effects, broody hens also provide most of the care for chicks as opposed to not having a broody hen and the owners must provide all the care. The methods of artificial rearing can be hazardous as there is risk for the chicks getting too much heat or not enough. Not only that, but heating lamps especially pose a risk of fire. Also, artificial rearing practices rely upon electricity to function and in some situations the electricity is not reliable. To conclude, chicks should be raised by a broody hen instead of by artificial means.