



Crop Check in Baby Chicks

FIELD GUIDE

What is a crop check?

- It is the best tool to evaluate if baby chicks have consumed feed after placement in the broiler house
- It is an indirect way to assess brooding practices. If brooding conditions are poor, chicks will not consume feed and/or water

Why to do it?

- To minimize chick's weight loss and stress
- To improve intestinal and immune development of the baby chicks
- To achieve higher body weights at 7 days of age
- To achieve higher body weights at processing
 - § One extra gram of body weight at 7 days equals 8 grams at processing (35 days)
 - § In a house with 20,000 chickens one extra gram of body weight will translate in 354 lbs extra of live weight at processing. If 7 flocks are grown during the year, 2,478 lbs extra of live weight will be produced.

How to do it?

- Palpate the crop of the chick which lies on the right side of the neck, close to the thorax. Check for the presence of feed inside the crop
- Perform crop checks in 10 chicks at 10 different areas of the house representing the whole environment (close and far from feed, water, heat, and light sources)
- Count how many chicks have full crops out of 100 chicks. This will give the percentage of full crops

Figure 1. Baby chick with full crop

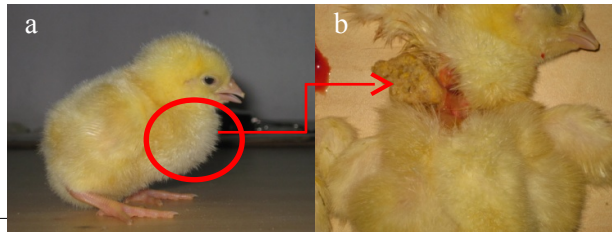
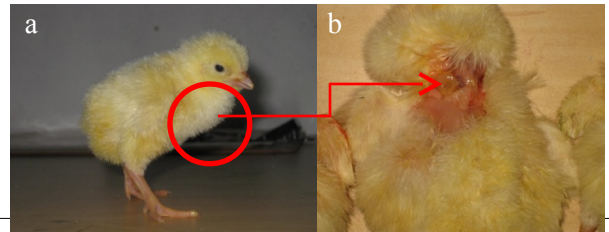


Figure 2. Baby chick with empty crop



What is the goal?

- As many baby chicks with full crops as quickly as possible after placement
- Rule of thumb: **>95% full crops 24 hours after placement**

How to achieve this goal?

- Feed - Amount, availability, within reach, in the comfort zone
- Water - Quality, amount, availability, within reach, in the comfort zone, temperature
- Temperature – Floor 85-90°F or 30-32°C. Under brooders 105°F or 40.5°C
- Air quality - Fresh air. Ammonia <25ppm. CO2 <3000ppm
- Light. Uniformly distributed At least 2 foot candles or 20 luxes
- Litter. Dry. No darkling beetles
- Walking chicks to stimulate their activity upon arrival will enhance early feed and water intake