

# How to Revive a Weak Chick and Keep it Healthy



Two days into a recent hatch and I had to revive a weak chick and then another! The hatch was sporadic. We had eight broody hens. There was no schedule to the hatch. The eggs were started sporadically and I was out of town. While I was away, new eggs were gathered by the broody hens! It was a bit out of control. One hen out of the eight allowed me to move her to the nursery. The other broody hens had a fit about being moved and so I put them back in the coop where they continued to brood. I continued to try to monitor and save any chicks that hatched, before they were harmed by other flock members. Who said it was easier letting a hen hatch out eggs?

## ***Disclaimer***

Before I go any further in my methods of how to revive a weak chick, keep in mind that I am sharing what worked for me. I am not advocating or giving any guarantee that my methods will save your chick's life. Also, I am a firm believer in thinking outside the box, and using what is available at that moment. My methods might be a little controversial to some who prefer to follow strict guidelines.

## **What do Chicks Need After Hatching**

If you have a broody hen, she will take care of all the chick's needs. Broody hens can take care of quite a large brood. Tucked under her wings, the chicks are snug, warm and dry. She encourages them to eat and drink throughout the day, while looking out for their safety. Pasty butt is rare in broody raised chicks because the hen knows what to tell the chicks to eat.

Chicks raised in a brooder have a bit of a harder road. No matter how closely we observe for problems, issues can arise. Pasty butt, chilled chicks, spilled water, and aggressive chicks can wreak havoc. Most of the time things go well, but there are times we need to intervene. Chicks need warmth, dry bedding, and food and water, that they can easily access. (Read about how much food a chick needs in [this post](#) )When a chick's needs are not met, it experiences stress. Chicks that are stressed by the environment cannot thrive.



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My recently hatched chicks were a few days behind the other three. The broody hen wanted no part of adopting the last hatchlings. So into the [brooder](#) they went. I use the warming table style heaters. All the chicks had access to water and food, with clean bedding. But the last two chicks that hatched, weren't strong. They stopped eating and drinking within 24 hours of hatching. I needed to try something or they would die.



## First step

Always make sure the chick is warm before trying to give food or water. I held the chick in my one hand while completing chores with the other. Next, I tried some Nutra-drench product

for poultry because I had it available in the barn. I mixed it in a bit of water and used a syringe to let drops fall on the tip of the beak. The chick was interested and started to open it's beak for the water. If you do this, also make sure the chick isn't getting wet from the drips.

As I was feeding the barn cats I had an idea. By now the chick was looking really weak despite the water. The bits of canned cat food looked like something I could try to feed the chick. At first the chick wouldn't open it's beak for the food. Then it took a bite. And another! Then it took a big bite. I gave it a few minutes to settle. I continued to give bits of wet cat food and after a few minutes more, the chick was struggling to use it's legs again. It was reviving! The eyes reopened and it chirped. How about that!



# Other Options to Use When You Revive a Weak Chick

Now, as I said in the disclaimer, this is a last ditch effort. I don't think chicks should routinely be fed cat food products. Cat food is high in protein, and the canned food is high in water. Both of these were good for the chick short term. If I hadn't acted quickly, I am not sure that this chick would have lasted while I prepared something else or If I had driven to a store. A good reason to have some ideas on hand, in the barn or feed shed.

## More Ideas to Revive a Weak Chick

Warmed plain yogurt

Scrambled egg

Hard boiled egg chopped tiny

Molasses water – Molasses also contains other nutrients

Make a mash or [tea of fresh herbs](#) that contain Vitamin E such as Parsley, Oregano, Sage, and Thyme

Sugar water \*use very [short term](#). Too much sugar can lead to pasty butt

Nutra-drench product

Poly-visol infant vitamin drops without iron –\**This also helps with wry neck which is a result of Vitamin E deficiency. You can read more on Wry Neck syndrome [here](#).*

The important thing is to get some nutrition into them and get them over the hard part. After 24 to 48 hours your chicks should be back on chick feed and able to cope. You may need to assess when to return them to the brooder with the other chicks.

[9 Foods that are not on the Chicken's Christmas List](#)

## What Do Chicks Need to Thrive?

In the best case scenario, a small number of chicks arrive and are transferred to a waiting brooder. They stay warm and within a short time, find food and water. The weaker ones learn from the bolder stronger chicks and all do quite well. But sometimes, chicks need some TLC to get past the initial days. They may have become chilled at some point and become too weak to get to the food. They may be not as strong and easily trampled by the other chicks. Once they are knocked down, it may be too much to struggle back up on their feet.

If possible, raise the weak chick with another non-aggressive [chick for company](#). Chicks all do better with at least one friend in the brooder.



Of course, we all want a good outcome and it is often a matter of timing. Do what you can to observe the chicks and help with some TLC if you see a weak chick. When you revive a weak chick, it is a rewarding feeling. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. When situations don't go as hoped, remember you gave that little chick, the best life it could have, even if it was a short life. I hope these ideas will help you if you have a need to revive a weak chick. Please leave your own remedies and ideas in the comments.





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