

Mail Order Chicks and Delivery Options

A Mail Carrier's Perspective on what you should and should not do when ordering mail order chicks



It's that time of year! You go to your mailbox, open the door and there it is!! The hatchery catalogue!!! Mail order chicks for everyone! Or perhaps you just found a few free moments and you decide to check in on Facebook. You open up to your news feed and there they are! 20 new posts of people sharing pictures of their baby chicks! Oh those sweet fluffy, fuzzy babies! Oh! All of those pretty colorful eggs! Brown, blue, green!!! Just this morning I saw a picture of a purple egg!!! Purple!! Dark purple! Beautiful unmistakable purple! Then you start to feel it. A warmth in your heart. A buzzing in your head. Reason

takes flight and suddenly like a moth to a flame, an addict to a drug, a hummingbird to nectar you NEED that chick!!!! Oh! and one of those lavender ones! Wait! I NEED one of those silkies! I will name it Sabrina and raise it like a pet and she will love me! Next thing you know, you are putting in an order for 66 chicks! They even have a name for this phenomenon. Chicken math! Yes. The struggle is real and I am a victim!



It was December 17th. I woke up at 4am, like I usually do, grabbed my coffee and sat down to browse all of the farm pages! There they were! Polish chickens with their funny heads! Fluffy Silkies that look puffy enough to snuggle! Buff Orpingtons with their super fluffy butts! Imagine all of the ?fluff butt Friday? pictures I could have if I had a Buff Orpington!!! I found myself on the Murray McMurray website and suddenly I was a woman possessed!!! A mad woman I tell you! I

ordered 2 of everything and then headed to the check out!!!

This is the point of no return! This is where you must calm your beating heart, quiet the roaring in your head and search for your sanity for a moment! I know it's hard, but if you want to give your chicks the best chance of arriving alive, there are a few things you need to consider before hitting that final button!



please note! Newspaper should never be used on very young chicks. It is too slippery of a surface and can lead to spraddle leg. These chicks are a few weeks old and better able to withstand the surface

How the Hatcheries Mail the Chicks

Buying chicks by mail has some difficulties associated with it. Most mail order chicks are sent the USPS (United States Postal Service aka The Post Office). I live in Northern California, but Murray McMurray's birds come from Iowa and Texas and Cackle Hatchery is in Missouri. That's a long ways to travel for a bunch of day old chicks. A neighbor of mine just received an order of 5 goslings. They shipped out on Wednesday and didn't arrive until Saturday. That's 4 days in a box, in the middle of winter! The hatcheries do what they can to help ensure that healthy birds are delivered to you. They pack them in ventilated boxes with padding and ship them express. During the colder months most hatcheries require that you order a minimum of 25 birds at a time. However, once the chicks leave the hatchery, they have no control over what happens next. Those babies are now in the care of the USPS.

Yesterday, when I got to work, we had 2 shipments of mail order chicks waiting to be picked up. The first was an order of 12 chicks and the second was my neighbor's order of 5 goslings. All 12 of the chicks were dead and of the goslings, 1 was dead and by the time my neighbor got home more goslings had died. There is no way to 'absolutely' prevent day old chicks from dying during transport. Whether you are picking them up your self or having them shipped through the mail sometimes they just don't make it. It's just one of those sad facts. There are however certain things you need to take into consideration to improve their chances of survival for mail order chicks.



Turkey poults arriving in the postal box

The first is the time of year. Right now, in Northern California, it feels like spring! It's been 60 degrees all week long with the warm sun shining! The grass is turning green and my irises, tulips and daffodils are starting to peek out of the ground! I have a cousin in Texas and he says it's 80 degrees there! But WAIT!!!! It's NOT spring! Although it's 60 degrees during the day, it's 30 degrees at night! That's pretty cold for a chick that's supposed to stay warm! Lots of chicks come through the post office in the summertime too. This is just as bad and, in my humble opinion, even worse.

When those chicks die and then sit in that box for days they smell really bad! Also, have you considered what the weather is like BETWEEN point A and point B? 80 degrees in Texas is a lot different than our 60 degrees here and an even bigger difference than the below zero temps that Puddle Dry Farm is experiencing in Maryland! When ordering your mail order chicks do your best to get a delivery date for spring. I ordered mine in December with a delivery date of April 4th. I paid at the time of the order to lock it in. The longer you wait to put in your order the less likely that the chicks you want are going to be available. Luckily the hatcheries give you options for delivery dates.

Timing is EVERYTHING when ordering mail order chicks

The second thing to take into consideration is holidays. Wait. What do holidays have to do with ordering chicks? I received a message from my neighbor on Thursday explaining that their chicks had shipped Wednesday and asking me if I would message them when they arrived. My neighbor was worried that they would arrive on Saturday and our Post Office is closed on Saturdays. Luckily we live in a small community and though the office part is ?technically? closed we still deliver on Saturdays and will give your mail order chicks to you, while we are there. Then came the next message from my neighbor, ?I don?t think they would survive until Monday?. Except that this Monday, tomorrow, is a holiday! Presidents Day! The post office is closed for 2 days and that would mean that those chicks can?t be picked up until Tuesday and they would have sat in that box for 7 days! That?s 7 days with out food and water. 7 days in freezing conditions and with out heat! Make sure when you order your chicks that you don?t order too close to a federal holiday. You want to be able to pick your **mail order chicks** up the moment they reach your post office! Wait! Go back a moment. With out heat? Yes. With out heat. That brings us to the next consideration when ordering mail order

chicks.



Once my neighbor's chicks reached California they went to a sorting facility in Southern California, were loaded into the back of an enclosed truck's cargo hold and then transported for hours across the state of California. The back of that truck isn't heated in the winter and has no air conditioning in the summer. Those cute little mail trucks you see delivering the mail, those don't have air conditioning either.

Even if they did, we drive with our windows down or doors open so the cold air would escape anyhow. The heaters aren't very effective either for the same reason. I can't speak for all post offices, but most turn the heat way down when the post office is closed. When we show up in the morning it is quite chilly! Or what if the heater or air conditioner is broke? Don't leave your chicks at the post office a moment longer than you have to! You may ask, "but how am I supposed to know exactly when my chicks will arrive?"

Tracking! Priority 2 day and Express shipping have tracking numbers! This allows you to see every time your chicks stop and switch to another truck and when they leave again. The USPS now has what's called "real time scans". That means if I leave your package on your porch at 11:15am, I also scanned it at 11:15am and your tracking information shows, "delivered at 11:15am on your porch". My neighbor could have saved them self a whole lot of stress if they had insisted on getting a **tracking number** when the chicks shipped.



If you simply can not work around the weather then make sure you pick your chicks up the moment they reach the Post Office. Let your carrier know that you have chicks on the way the day

they are sent and ask them to call you the moment they get to the post office. The sooner you pick your mail order chicks up the better their chances of survival. As a mail carrier, trust me when I say, most mail carriers and clerks will thank you!!! In a post office, the sound of baby chicks may be cute at first, but it gets old pretty fast. It's also hard to work around them if you have a small post office and even harder to handle them with care when we are out on route. After all we have a lot of other packages and mail to deliver too!!! I've seen people leave their chicks at the post office all day in the summer. Don't do that!!! If you can't make it to the post office ask a friend or family member to pick them up for you!

You are your mail order chicks last line of defense. If you take all of these things into consideration, your chicks will have a much better chance of survival. Time of year weather and temps holidays tracking picking them up the moment they reach the post office,

Best of Luck!

Please help me welcome Jo Ann Whitfield (AKA Farmer Jo) to the TimberCreekFarm website. Farmer Jo lives in California and writes about farming and life on their homestead under the title [The Adventures Farmer Jo and Duke](#) on Facebook and other social media. Please visit her and tell her you loved this post!



When not to order?

What to avoid doing?

Do I need a tracking number?

A Postal Employee's View of Mail Order Chicks



For more on the subject of starting chicks off strong,

[6 Easy Chick Brooder Ideas](#)

[When is the Best Time to Start Chicks](#)