



ANIMAL LIBERATION
QUEENSLAND

Chicken hatching

The wonder of a disposable life



"From what I have read of chicken hatching projects, these have too many uncertainties with regard the welfare of the animals concerned, and their subsequent fate, to outweigh whatever educational purposes they are supposed to serve"

- Professor Barry Spurr, University of Sydney, Fellow, Australian College of Educators

What are chicken hatching projects?

Every year around Australia many thousands of baby chickens are born in pre-schools, kindergartens and primary schools.

Fertilised eggs are delivered to school classrooms and kept in incubators until they hatch. Baby chickens are then kept and observed for about a week. The hatching event and the week of care is supposed to teach young children about the wonders of life.

The week-old chicks are then either returned to the supplier where their fate, particularly that of roosters, is uncertain, or taken by families who may or may not have any experience in properly caring for chickens. When city-living families who take in a chick discover they have been given a rooster, they must dispose of him because of council noise regulations.

Why is this happening?

Chicken hatching companies regularly market their 'programs' to schools. The incubator is of a suitably small size for a classroom. Young children invariably find animals fascinating so they are engaged by the chicks being in their classroom. Some teachers welcome the oral language opportunities provided by the chicken hatching project.

The lesson never taught - Chickens are a marvel of nature!

The lesson that is often missed or underplayed through this 'learning project' is that mother chickens are one of the marvels of nature. A mother hen turns each egg carefully and as often as 30 times a day. She uses her beak, feet and body to ensure each egg maintains the proper temperature, moisture, ventilation and position. She will always 'talk' to her unborn chicks. This is Mother Nature at her best!

The lesson delivered by chicken hatching projects is that mothers are not always needed by the chicks! Children learn that technology can replace Mother Nature - when there is money to be made by it.

Important life lessons lost

Chicken hatching projects do not teach young and impressionable minds important life lessons about compassion, responsibility and justice. Instead students can be misled into thinking that chicks need a machine but have no need of a mother or family life. Importantly, chicken hatching projects do not teach children that bringing a life into the world means having a permanent responsibility for the life created.



In choosing an alternative you are helping to build a society in which it will one day be considered unthinkable to generate a living being simply as a lesson for young students.

Teachers who undertake these projects are potentially contributing to the societal problem of unwanted animals and animal suffering, just so their students can experience a temporary 'wow factor' when they observe the cute chicks. There is a cruel irony at work here and young students who invariably have a genuine love of animals would, of course, be distressed if they knew the fate that could befall many of the chicks.

What are the alternatives?

Chicken hatching projects can be replaced with many different options. Take an excursion, watch a video, use an egg hatching model kit, or read a book. With so many ways to show young children the life cycles of animals and plants there is no need to bring new and unwanted lives into the world just for a classroom project.

Visit our website at www.animalliberationqld.org.au/chick_hatching.htm for more information.