

**Tips on Propagating Pheasant Chicks**  
**Provided by Game Bird Grower Jesse Newton**  
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**Building or Brooding Area**

The brooder house area for pheasant chicks should be weather tight, free from drafts and rodent proof. It can be designed for the birds or part of another building that can have a penned in portion.

Use this basic guide to determine floor space for your pens or buildings:

Age	Square Ft
Day-old to 2 weeks	.25
3 weeks to 6 weeks	1
6 weeks to 12 weeks	4

**Heat Source**

Either a gas hover or electric heat lamps with reflectors can be used as a heat source for the young birds. Heat lamps are the easiest to use. Four 250 watt heat bulbs should be used for up to 250 chicks. The distance from the heat source to the floor will determine the comfort of the chicks (lower to increase heat applied, higher to decrease heat applied).

Study the chicks after putting them down to determine if the heat is at the correct temperature. If the chicks are piling in the center (not merely laying side by side) they are too cold, lower the heat source closer to the chicks; if they have scattered to the perimeter of the chick guard and/or are panting, the heat source will need to be raised from the chicks somewhat. Usually the problem is too cold; however, intense heat will dehydrate the chicks causing E.C.M (Early Chick Mortality).

**Litter**

Use a dry, coarse litter for your birds, such as chopped straw or wood shavings. If you use straw you might want to flatten or chop it somewhat to allow the chicks to get around easier. If you must use shavings (or something with fines that the birds might eat) cover it with burlap or an old bed sheet for the first ten days. This will ensure the birds will eat only the feed presented to them.

**Water and Feeders**

Use plastic gallon founts you can buy in most hardware stores or feed mills. They are unbreakable and clean up nicely. Put several within the chick area - it's important that they find the feed and water, mostly water, within a few hours of being put in the brooding area.

They may find it mainly out of curiosity. After a day or two, add a couple of the metal reel type feeders, but leave the flats in there until you are sure they are eating from the other type of feeder. Two or three of the one gallon plastic waters per 50 chicks is about right. It is getting kind of crowded in there, but you want the chicks to trip over this stuff until they know what it is. If the litter starts to get wet and dirty after a few days, change it.

**What Do I Feed?**

A seven-week-old pheasant will have consumed a mere two pounds of feed or less by the time it reaches that age. Therefore, you can see the feed becomes an insignificant part of the growing out or "bringing up" of the young bird from an expense standpoint. However, from a nutritional level, it is probably the

most important segment of the bird's 18-week climb to maturity.

NEVER use a chicken starter on game birds. Use either a game bird starter or a commercial turkey starter. It must be granule or ground type feed and must have a protein level NO lower than 28% (30% protein is even better).

Here's another helpful table:

Age	Amount of Feed Consumed
Day-old to 6 weeks	2 lb total per bird
6 weeks to Maturity	approx. 1 lb per week per bird

### **Water**

Keep water fresh! Clean, fresh water will do as much or more to stimulate growth and vitality in your birds than anything else you do.

### **Outside Runway**

Getting your birds outside as early as possible, about five weeks of age, for a few hours each day, will make or break your project from a livability standpoint after releasing. Several things happen when you introduce the birds to this outside environment:

- The cooler outside air will begin to promote faster, more thorough feathering.
- The conditioning process prior to release takes place, i.e. dusting, pecking at greens, exercising, etc.

You can spray the birds with a water mist in this outside area to activate the oil and preening glands which waterproofs and hardens the birds. This of course is helpful as they encounter their first rain storms.

Here's how you should build this runway - build it to accommodate the number of birds you have. It should be constructed completely of no larger than 1" poultry netting for the top. It must have a top to keep the birds in and predators out. The wire for the walls must, must be buried in the ground at least 12" deep (20" is better).

Remember to run the birds back into the building each night (at least on nights when you know the weather will be cold or rainy) as a heavy rainstorm could drive them into the corners resulting in piling.

NOTE: Birds should be 8 weeks of age or older before you put them outside permanently because their feather development is complete by this age. The back feathers are the last to come, so you would very likely experience bird loss during a night storm where the cold rain makes direct contact with their skin. Good, thick cover is always helpful in these situations too.