

NEWLY HATCHED DUCKLINGS

- By Nancy Eilertsen

Newly hatched ducklings should be kept in an aquarium with a heating pad (low setting) underneath half the aquarium. Use old towels and paper towels in the bottom of the aquarium. Ducklings defecate often and are extremely messy. Changing the aquarium often is necessary both for their sake and yours. Make a little house out of a cardboard box as ducklings usually like a place to hide.

Shredded newspaper can be used but do NOT use flat sheets of newspapers in any baby bird or duckling's cage. The surface is too slippery and they can develop "splayed legs" where the legs go out to either side and cannot support their weight.

Place a small, shallow container of water in the aquarium along with a small, shallow dish of Turkey or Game Bird starter or developer. The starter is similar to chicken mash but has more protein. Developer (or crumbles) resembles gray Grape Nuts Cereal. For newly hatched ducklings, mix the water and starter or crumbles together so it's easier to eat. Use a shallow saucer (flower pot saucers work best) and put pebbles in the dish. Check it every few hours as the wet starter will turn sour. As the ducklings get a little older, the starter is offered dry with water nearby.



Ducklings can drown! Always put rocks or ramps in any container of water and don't leave them alone in water when they're very little. Without their mother's warmth, little ones can get cold and crash even in a saucer of water. When this happens, get the duckling on a heating pad or other heat source immediately. If it's not too late, the duckling will be running around and peeping like crazy within a half hour.

Duckling rehabbers can fill up quickly as batches of 12 or 14 orphans can come in at a time and **we always can use more help**. Ducklings eat on their own and do not have to be hand fed.