



Living Eggs

Using Animals In Schools

*Ethical considerations for the use
of animals in schools*

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Introduction

Animals play a valuable role in the learning process and relate to many areas of the curriculum.

These days, with fewer pets in the home or chickens in the garden, there is an additional need for interaction with animals for scientific learning, and nurturing and caring programs. Observation of animals, and interaction through caring for them, develops an empathy and sensitivity for living creatures.

Community concerns for the care of animals has changed over the years and what was acceptable in the past is not necessarily correct in these enlightened days. As a result, animal ethics committees have been established to ensure that where animals are used, proper care and consideration is given to their well-being.

Living Eggs fully supports these actions and principles, and has compiled this document to assist the teacher to make a considered decision.

Why the Living Eggs Programme?

Animals have been used in the classroom for many years, not only for observation but for social studies (e.g. imprinting) and also dissection.

Living Eggs staff, through previous experience with animals in education, identified a need for an extended programme that demonstrated various aspects of animal life including life cycle, behaviour, interaction, and growth and change, in a safe environment.

After detailed research, chicks were considered the most suitable animal to demonstrate these aspects, and more. Some of the reasons for using chicks are as follows:

- Fertile eggs are readily available and are not seasonal
- Transport of both eggs and chicks can be done in a humane and stress-free manner
- All aspects of the programme can be demonstrated in a short (two week) period
- Eggs are available from accredited hatcheries ensuring highest hygiene practices
- Relocation of chicks at the end of the programme can be easily accomplished

And so the Living Eggs programme was hatched.

We believe the following pages address the important issues relating to the use of chicks in the classroom.

If you have further concerns or any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

Points to Consider

Justification

While most teachers are clear in their purpose for wishing to use animals in the classroom, it is perhaps timely to review some valid reasons. The following is not a complete list and is mainly aimed at the lower year groups. Higher level purposes e.g.. animal husbandry have not been included as they are outside the scope of the Living Eggs programme.

- Life Cycle studies
- Responsible animal care and management
- Pet ownership, relationships and responsibilities
- Empathy with and understanding of animals
- Animal behaviour
- Interpreting the laws of nature
- Extending language and observation skills
- Learning by experience

Sourcing

Points to consider:

Are your eggs “clean”?

Are your eggs hatchable?

Does your supplier have a proven hatch rate and hygiene history?

Is your supplier an accredited hatchery?

Eggs may be obtained from many sources and in a variety of breeds.

Many breeds have a low hatch rate and backyard growers and many hobbyists do not have the resources to ensure vaccination against transmissible diseases. Shell born pathogens are also a concern and eggs from these sources have generally not been sanitized.

Living Eggs sources the eggs from accredited hatcheries where high hatchability and hygiene are of the utmost importance. All have strict bio-security protocols in place. The breeding stock are all vaccinated for transmissible diseases and the eggs are fumigated prior to setting. They are further sanitized using a proprietary bacterial wash before delivery to the schools.

Caring



Points to Consider

Points to consider:

- Do you have a safe and secure housing for the chicks?***
- Do you have suitable feed?***
- Do you have a comprehensive care manual?***
- Do you have a 24 hour helpline for technical advice and support?***

Care of animals in the classroom is a prime concern. The Living Eggs programme provides

- Secure housing for the eggs and chicks
- All feed and bedding
- Comprehensive manual detailing all aspects of the programme
- A Helpline phone number providing support 24 hours a day, seven days a week

An important consideration is weekend care. One option is to attend the classroom daily to check on the welfare of the chicks.

An alternative is for a responsible family to “adopt” and care for them. The brooder is a safe and secure housing for transport and caring over the weekend. The helpline phone number is attached to the brooder for support and advice if necessary over the weekend.

How Many?

Points to consider:

- Have you considered your ideal number?***
- Have you allowed for some failures?***
- Have you allowed sufficient for the program objectives?***
- Have you allowed for any flock instincts?***

In considering numbers, it is important to ensure that animals are kept to a minimum. Chicks are flock animals and are most comfortable in a group. A mother hen typically hatches 8 to 12 chicks.

We supply 10 eggs and would expect between 8 and 10 to hatch. Should the success rate be somewhat less, this still leaves sufficient chicks to ensure they are comfortable in a flock environment. This number also allows handling exercises to be shared among them thus reducing stress on the chicks.

We believe any more would be unnecessary.

Transport

Points to consider:

Points to Consider

***Do you have a proven method to transport fertile or embryo eggs?
Do you have a comfortable and stress-free means of transporting the chicks***

Transport by individuals with little or no experience can cause low hatch rates in eggs and stress to the chicks.

Living Eggs staff are all experienced in this field and both eggs and chicks are transported in stress-free and comfortable conditions.

Disposal

Points to consider:

***Have you solved your disposal problem BEFORE you proceed with the programme?
Do you have acceptable and ethical means of relocating the chicks after the programme?***

Disposal of chicks after the programme is a major concern. Children and families (and teachers) become attached to their chicks and will be interested in their on-going welfare. It is not acceptable to thoughtlessly send them off to homes without assurance of proper care or to have them “put down” for the lack of an alternative. It is important to have a means of disposal available PRIOR to committing to a programme that includes animals.

Living Eggs representatives have the means to relocate any chicks that are returned from the programme. This varies from place to place but includes hobby farmers and free range egg growers. The chicks do not go to “battery” style locations as all commercial growers have strict bio-security practices in place that prevent outside stock from entering.

As an alternative, families may take them home for backyard layers or as pets. Living Eggs provides comprehensive “Home Rearing” notes to ensure they are properly cared for. We ask the teacher to ensure that copies of these notes are sent home prior to the chicks being collected. We also ask for the teacher’s judgment as to the suitability of those who wish to take them. If in doubt please send them back to us.