

What's Wrong With Hatching Projects?

Essential information if you are considering doing a chick-hatching project with your students

A number of companies offer to supply chicken and duck eggs for hatching in class. There are, however, a few things that you should be aware of before embarking on one of these programmes.



The birds' fate

A key consideration is what is going to happen to the chicks or ducklings who hatch from the eggs.

The companies who market this service claim to offer to rehome the offspring at the end of the projects. However, teachers who are concerned about the fate of the returned birds, particularly the cockerels, often look to rehome them with animal sanctuaries.

This is causing a problem for animal rescue centres all over the country. Many are regularly approached to offer homes for unwanted birds. For them it is a real challenge, overstressing already limited resources.

Hatching projects encourage the view that animals are disposable objects instead of requiring a lifetime of care and commitment. They encourage children to want to bring more baby animals into the world such as litters of puppies and kittens, who may not be wanted when they grow up.

The birds' welfare

A second concern is the welfare of the birds following hatching.

Health problems can arise and schools do not always have the knowledge or resources to deal with them. Niall Lester who manages New Hope Animal Rescue in London said that they had been asked to take in six ducklings by a school –

and two of them had twisted legs. One had to be euthanised because the school hadn't dealt with the problem early enough.

It is very difficult to provide optimal conditions in a classroom incubator and, as a result, chicks may be sickly, dehydrated and poorly developed when they hatch. Chick organs often stick to the sides of the shell as a result of the eggs not being turned properly in the mechanical incubator. By contrast, a mother hen turns each of her eggs, individually, as often as 30 times a day. Using her body, feet and beak she moves each egg to maintain the proper temperature, moisture, ventilation, humidity and positioning of each embryo on which she is sitting.



Alternatives to hatching projects

There are better ways to teach 'life process of reproduction in animals' than doing hatching projects.

Wi-Fi bird box camera system

Using live footage from Wi-Fi camera nesting boxes to observe birds in nature being born and reared by their parents is a much better way to teach the topic.

Order your Wi-Fi camera bird box from Gardenature through our website AnimalKind.org.uk and get 20% off.



Live camera streams

Your students can watch a wide range of live wildlife camera streams at wildlifekate.co.uk.

Species you can watch include tawny owls, barn owls, kestrels and jackdaws. Each live stream has a dedicated page, providing information and footage captures.



Visit AnimalKind.org.uk for more information on humane alternatives to hatching projects and 20% off your Wi-Fi bird box camera system order.

Comments from animal sanctuaries:

'Hatching projects in primary schools have become a major problem ... we get so many calls to take in chicks and ducklings that have been reared in a classroom.'

Neil Winn-Williams, Foal Farm Animal Rescue Centre, Kent

'Every year without fail we receive numerous requests from schools for us to take in either chicks or ducklings.'

Steven Marsh, Fresh Fields Animal Rescue, Liverpool

'We are asked on a fairly regular basis to take in ducks and other poultry following hatching projects in schools.'

Janet Taylor, Farm Animal Sanctuary, Worcestershire

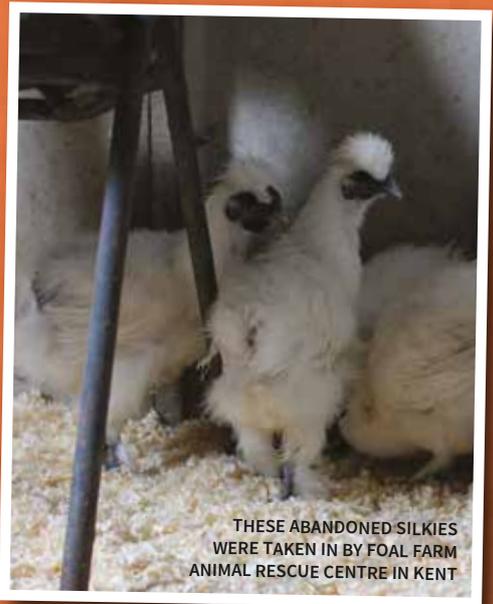
Policy statements from animal welfare organisations:

RSPCA: *'The RSPCA opposes breeding programmes in schools. This concern includes the use of incubators and artificial environments for animals. It is difficult to guarantee the welfare of breeding animals under school conditions and the RSPCA believes that such programmes of study do not promote responsible attitudes to animal care and husbandry.'*



British Hen Welfare Trust:

'The British Hen Welfare Trust receives at least 3 calls a day asking for help to re-home unwanted cockerels, both through school and home hatching projects. Any educational benefits gained are now increasingly outweighed by the growing number of unwanted males, and we would like to see this practice replaced with a more ethical way of learning.'



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