

Dear Teacher/s

We are aware that (grade/daycare etc) intends to run an egg hatching program this term. We only recently became aware that some schools still choose to run these programs, as many other schools have, in line with advice from the RSPCA and other animal welfare organisations, phased them out and chosen options that are kinder to animals. The RSPCA released a clear policy that requested schools do not use or breed live animals.

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-animal-welfare-issues-with-chick-hatching-in-schools/>

These programs are often undertaken with the goal of teaching kids about life cycles, observing the habits of animals and sharing the planet, yet the RSPCA outlines how hatching programs fail to demonstrate these.

1. Lifecycles and caring for life

Should we teach children that when we bring life into the world, including animals and pets, that we have an ongoing responsibility to take care of that animal for their natural life? As the RSPCA paper outlines, approximately 50% of the chicks who hatch will be male. As male chicks cannot lay, in the egg industry they are killed at birth. This would be their fate if returned to the company. Attempts to rehome roosters can be incredibly challenging as many areas don't permit keeping them and there are already far more seeking homes (from backyard breeding of chickens).

2. Understanding nature and animal habits

A mother hen continually turns each of her eggs throughout the day and night. She uses her beak, feet and body to ensure each egg maintains the property temperature, moisture, ventilation and position. This helps to maintain the welfare of unborn chicks and is vital to their proper development. The incubator egg process is very far removed from nature. Chicks imprint on their mother almost as soon as they hatch, if she is not around they imprint on humans who in a school environment, aren't around over the weekend or overnight. This is very stressful to young chicks. The relationship of mother hen and her chicks, an integral part of a chicks life, is absent for chicks hatched in incubators.

Having spoken with other parents about this issue, others share our concern and would like to follow the RSPCA's advice to keep live animals out of the classroom. The paper mentioned above is a fantastic resource and after consulting it many educators have decided to seek alternatives such as books, models, charts or to study life cycles.

If the school would like some interactive experiences, we'd recommend visiting an animal sanctuary such as Little Oak Sanctuary, for an educational experience that involves observing and interacting rescued animals in their own environments, under their terms.

Thank you so much for reading this and considering choosing options that are kinder to animals.

Kind regards,