

Schools Animal Ethics Committee (SAEC)

Guidelines for chick handling

Approved 11 August 2022

Introduction

- The guidelines are to provide teachers and education assistants methods how to handle chicks in a gentle and safe manner, and teach students the appropriate way to handle chicks.
- These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the Chicken egg hatching under the science curriculum using a commercial supplier and using school or personal or school equipment.
- Animal handling is governed by the [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes](#) (the Code), which applies to all stages of animal care and use.

The recommended level of handling per chick is no more than 15 minutes per session, and no more than two sessions per day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon.

Correct handling method for teachers

To take a chick from the brooder box:

- place your hand across the middle of the chick's back, gently but firmly securing its' wings;
- secure the chick's legs and lower part of the body with your other hand, encircling the chick with both hands; and
- carefully lift and carry the chick close to your body if you need to walk with it.

Suggested handling methods for young students

- Students should not be handling chicks until all chicks are dry and fluffy. This is generally one day after the last chick hatches.
- Whether students handle chicks is at the discretion of the teacher in charge.
- Take into consideration the age and capabilities of the students and whether there may be risk of harm to the chicks before instigating an activity handling animals.
- If there are one or more students that pose a risk, then the activity for the whole group should be amended to remove chick handling, reducing the risk to the chicks.
- Young students must be explicitly taught that it will hurt the chicks if they are handled roughly, squeezed or dropped.
- Students must not walk around holding chicks or pass chicks to each other.

Method 1: No picking up or holding

1. In small groups, students enclose a small area on the floor.
2. Students sit on the floor around the enclosure.
3. Teacher gently places the chicks inside the enclosure.

Method 2: Holding

1. Students sit on the floor with a towel in their lap.
2. Teacher takes the chick from the brooder demonstrating the correct method and holds the chick for a few seconds until it is calm.
3. Once the chick is calm, the teacher gently places it into the cupped hand of the student. The student gently but securely places a hand over the chick's wings to safely encircle its body.

Multiple class usage

- Where there are rotating classes and a large number of students participating, handling activities should be rostered in a manner that will reduce stress on the chicks. The teacher will use their discretion as to which classes do and do not handle chicks.