

PEAFOWL REPORT

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Learn all about
hatching your
peahen eggs
successfully



HATCHING YOUR PEAHEN EGGS!

This story was originally published in 2006, and now it's been updated with the latest information on hatching your peahen eggs for the 21st-century. This story should help you find success in hatching your eggs.

It is that time of the year for all peafowl owners to start thinking about the upcoming egg season. For some, you will have to wait for another year or two until your birds are able to lay eggs. For all the rest, this is a time we need to get ready to meet the arrival of our first egg of the season.

The question we are asked the most is "When will the first eggs be laid?" In the Midwest our average date has been around April 24. We have had an egg or two in January and a sporadic egg in February or March. If you live in a warmer part of the USA, then your first egg could arrive one to two months earlier.

We have to be on the lookout, as many times the eggs are found frozen and cracked in the morning. We had no idea that the peahen was going to lay any eggs the evening before. Many times we have below freezing temperatures in April and May which requires me to make several trips out to the barn to collect the eggs each evening after dark.

Most poultry lay eggs and hatch out chicks long before our first peahen egg is laid. People new to peafowl seem to be very impatient with the lateness of our egg and chick season. Many have a good reason to be impatient, as the summer months are shorter for many of the northern states.



5 Year Old White Male

With luck, your eggs could hatch out to a beautiful peacock like this one, our pet white peacock.

Winter seems to arrive sooner the further north you live. Most want eggs hatched out in early spring so the new hatchlings are well established before winter arrives.

This is really a problem for peafowl as they are so late. There is nothing we can do but to take our eggs/peachicks when they arrive. My clients over the years want all poultry eggs and chicks at the same time, which will not happen for peahen eggs and peachicks. It's funny, when our client's eggs do not arrive until after June they panic and get nervous. I remind them that peahen eggs go long after all other poultry. We have a longer season than most and we sure enjoy that even if our eggs come later than most poultry.

Over the last 33 years I have had a theory which can be proved time and time again. We say the earlier the egg is hatched the sooner the male grows feathers and the peahen will lay eggs. This is why we try to order any new stock we want very early each year. We like to order in January so we can be the first to have our new arrivals.

These things should be done as early in January or as soon as you can each year. A good timetable for getting ready for eggs is as follows: 1. Move all peahens at least 2 months before the first egg is expected. 2. Be sure that they have plenty of oyster shells for a source of calcium mixed in the feed. You should keep the same amount in the feed all year long. We know of some that only give it during egg season. We feel that it is very important to provide it year around. 3. Have a liquid calcium such as CalDex (see page 15 of our book #2) in case the peahen gets egg bound. You can get it from your local veterinarian. 4. Have a good bed of fresh straw so the eggs have a good cushion. Many times a peahen will lay the eggs from the roost and if you do not have good bedding the egg will crack.

The next important step is to come up with a way to incubate your eggs. You can let the peahen hatch out the eggs if you like. However, be warned that many peahens do

not always make good mothers and will lay eggs all over the pen and never sit on the eggs. We get 100's of calls and e-mails on this every season. Some go to placing the eggs in a nest in hopes that the peahen will sit. In addition, they have done so many other things that will never get a peahen to sit. So, if your peahens do not sit after 3-8 eggs and they do not sit 14 days after the first egg is laid you can only do one thing, incubate them yourself!

Many of our clients have escaped the above problems and were able to find success in hatching eggs by way of using a good incubator, ducks, guineas, geese, and chickens.

Many have used setting chickens with very good success. Be warned that chickens can cause Blackhead disease in peafowl and that could be fatal to your peafowl. If you need a way to keep Blackhead from your peafowl check out and order Newsletter issue 15-5. We may have found something that helps with Blackhead.

We have used ducks and geese to hatch out our eggs in the past with much success! However, we have chosen to incubate at least 95% of the time on our eggs. It should be noted that a peahen or mother bird is the best method with the greatest success in incubation. If we could ever find an incubator that is as good as a mother bird we would have higher percentages of hatches each season.

We have written lots about incubators in the past 33 years in the Peafowl Report. We have not used any incubator other than two from GQF the Hova Bator (a 1981 model) and the 1202 (a 1986 model). We have been and still are very happy with the two and they work just like the day we got them. We have invited GQF, along with several other manufacturers to be in our incubator test for 2006.

We have several incubators on their way at the time of writing this story. We expect to have a fun season seeing how well the

different incubators work on peahen eggs. When these test results are completed we will publish the results for our readers.

One question we get 100's of times each year is "Do I have to spend a lot on an incubator?" The answer is "No." You can buy one of the smallest and least expensive ones and they will do very well in incubation of your eggs. We would recommend the GQF (<http://www.gqfmg.com>) Air flow Hova-Bator 1583 at about \$102.90 plus shipping. You can get an optional automatic turner 1610 for an additional \$57.28. If you do not get the turner, you will have to turn the eggs yourself 3+ times a day.

If you find another incubator from another company, and you want to know how many peahen eggs it will hold, ask them how many goose eggs it will hold. Since a goose egg is a bit bigger than a peahen egg, you can know the right amount of peahen eggs it will hold. A turkey egg is closer to the size of a peahen egg.

Do a search on the web looking for incubators and you will not find many. We found GQF in Savannah, Georgia, Brower in Houghton, Iowa, Lyon Technologies in Chula Vista, Ca and a couple more that we could not get the web page to load.

At this point in time we can only speak to one kind of incubator. That is the one that worked well for us the last 33 years, the GQF. Now, if you're wanting to hatch more than 30 peahen eggs then you will need a larger incubator like the GQF 1202E Classic Sportsman. The old GQF 1202 I use today holds 90 peahen eggs. Since I do not own a 1202E, I really do not know it's capacity from experience. However, when talking to GQF, I was told that the trays are the same size as the 1202. This means that it should hold up to 90 peahen eggs.

The Sportsman 1202E weighing in at 96 pounds will set you back about \$598.00 plus shipping. Shipping on this unit can be

a bit costly as it cost me nearly \$100.00 on my 1202 in 1986. The 15202E comes with many extra fun options too numerous to list here.

So, once you have decided what incubator works, the amount of eggs you want to hatch and decide what is best for your budget, you need to consider where you keep your incubator. You need a place that has good airflow and ventilation. In addition the temperature of the room that houses the incubator is very important. It must be a good insulated room as well as a dust free environment for the new electronics that are running the incubators today, or so say the manufacturers! We have ours in the worst possible place and we have had very good hatching results. But if you could, I would find a good place to hatch your eggs.

Humidity control is what I consider the most important issue in successful egg incubation. If you have too much humidity (like we have in Iowa) your chicks can drown in the eggs during incubation. If it is too dry, like in places with low humidity, your chicks will find it very hard to hatch and will stick to the egg causing the egg not to hatch.

I am always asked how much moisture I put into our incubator and I always say none. Most are puzzled at my answer, as it is not what they expected. We need to have an environment that keeps the humidity at or above what is needed without air conditioning.

As many of our long time readers know, we do not have air conditioning in our home. We have just put up with all the heat and humidity. I spend so much time outside each summer and our bodies do not have to adjust to the climate changes of going into an air-conditioned room all day long. I should say that a normal climate of around 75-80 degrees with dew points of 50-60 degrees are what we feel is the best one could have for hatching eggs. Humans feel comfortable with these conditions as well.

Since most of the people are not like us and have and use air conditioning then you must be sure to candle your eggs every day to insure that your eggs have ample moisture in them. Air conditioning will suck out the moisture from eggs and the end result is that the eggs will not hatch. You will need to make sure that your eggs will have an air space no larger than a 50 cent piece at day 14. If you see your air space dipping almost 3/4 of the egg then your eggs have too little moisture.

If you see an air space in the egg the size of a quarter at day 14 then your eggs have too much moisture in them. There is not much you can do if you do not use air conditioning. The next thing you can do is to move the incubator into an air conditioned house and this may suck out the extra moisture. I really do not think your hatch will be good with this problem.

Good news on this issue. We have much humidity over the last 33 years. We have only seen way too much moisture, maybe once or twice over the last 33 years. Don't get me wrong. We are very humid, but not to the point to where the eggs need to be in a better environment. Readers in the south and southeast part of the USA would have way more problems with this heat and humidity. You may need to make a hatching room with air conditioning in for the incubator. Or you can have the incubator in the same room with a dehumidifier, as this may take out some of the excess humidity.

It is very important to note here that you should never have the temperature set too high on your incubator. It should be set at 99.5 for 28 days. Some people on the peafowl chat rooms are saying that their eggs hatch at 25 days. I, too, can get my eggs to hatch in 25 days, but that requires a higher temperature for the 25 days. That is very dangerous and your eggs may not hatch at all using higher temperatures. If they do, you might see peachicks hatch out with health issues. It should be noted that when our incubator's thermostat went

"nuts" causing the temperatures to go above 99.5, we did not always see peachicks with major health issues when they hatched out.

We have been talking about eggs you get from your own birds on your place. But getting eggs in the mail from someone like us can have a few problems to deal with. We ship about 1000 eggs each year and since 9/11 we have had problem with the USPS randomly x-raying eggs without warning or notice to our clients or us. This may make eggs appear infertile and they will not hatch!

Some other issues with getting shipped eggs are delay in shipment, improper handling, excess heat or cold during shipment and priority mail can take up to 10 days to arrive at the final destination. The USPS said priority mail should take 2-4 days. Eggs that are handled roughly during shipment may cause the germ in the eggs to die before it ever starts to develop. Such an egg, after a week or two of incubation may appear infertile, but the germ died before it could be seen with the naked eye.

We ship our eggs by priority mail. When we do hold eggs, (not more than 14 days), we keep them in our root cellar in which the temperature is 50 to 60 degrees. We turn the eggs every day exercising the yolk ensuring a better hatch. Shipped eggs can be compared to the stock market, sometimes all will hatch, sometimes none will hatch, and anything in between can happen.

So your success depends on many factors such as: 1. Proper moisture during incubating; 2. Proper temperature for the entire duration of the incubation; 3. An accurate thermometer; 4. No power outages; 5. Delivery of mail order hatching eggs in a timely fashion without delays by the shipping agent. It should also be noted that eggs exposed to extremely high or low temperatures during transit for any length of time can also cause eggs not to hatch.

So, after reading all of the above negatives on getting hatching eggs sent in the mail one might say "I will not get mail order hatching eggs as there is too much risk". We have found that many of our clients have very good luck if they follow all the do's and don'ts of hatching eggs we outlined here. It is also very important to not cut corners in any way when it comes to the incubation of your eggs.

Sometimes, even if you follow all directions we described here your eggs will not hatch. We have to take on the mentality of the pioneers who founded our country. They simply never gave up and kept trying it over

and over again until success occurred. This is what we have done over the last 33 years and we have been blessed with much success in all we do. We hope, in some way, our thoughts and ideas based on our personal experience will work as well for you as it has for us.

Be sure to order our two DVDs "The Wacky World Peafowl" Vol. 1 & 2, The DVDs & The e-books at peafowl.com.

We also sell peahen Hatching eggs from April to August on our web page. New for 2013 is the 96 minutes long DVD of our new peacock TV series called,



**Editors,
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"Mr Peacock And Friends"

This series was designed for young people to learn about peafowl. But adults are also enjoying it as much as the children.

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