



## EMU CHICK CARE GUIDE

Thank you for purchasing an emu chick from us at Olive Branch Farm! Emu chicks are as cute as it gets and are lots of fun but they do require some specific handling to grow strong and healthy. I would highly suggest you educate yourself on the species, if you are a first time owner, before you bring your chick home. There is a great book titled *The Emu Farmer's Handbook* that I got on Amazon a few years back for \$40. I would also recommend joining any of the emu related groups on FB like The Emu Owners Club, Backyard Emus or Emus as Pets where you can search through past posts for specific information or ask questions when you encounter a problem.

General requirements to owning an emu are that you have to have adequate land and fencing for them. They are a very large animal and require a minimum of 5,000 square feet of field space in adulthood. The more, the better. These animals love to run so the larger the space, the better, and acreage is ideal. This is not a suburban backyard animal. They can also jump high, especially when stressed or frightened, so secure fencing is also a must. Six foot or higher, well supported fencing is recommended for an adult bird. And emu ownership should not be an impulse decision. These birds can live for over thirty years so you should be a home owner who is well settled before deciding to add an emu. With all of these things in place, emu ownership can be very rewarding and enjoyable!

Like all chicks, emu require heat when you are transporting them home and when you set up their brooder. Setting up their brooder space and having food on hand BEFORE you bring them home is an absolute must! Heat requirements for a newly hatched chick is 97 degrees, dropping five degrees every week until you equalize with lowest outside air temperatures or they have developed adult feathers. If you are familiar with chicken chicks the concept is the same but the process will move faster and your emu chick will not be as reliant for warmth as their body mass is larger.

Emu feed is a very debatable topic if you get on any of the owner forums so ultimately the decision is yours to make based upon your personal research. Make sure you have that done and food on hand before you bring your chick home. Most importantly, you need to decide on a space to brood your chick. Splay leg is a serious and common problem in emu chicks and proper nutrition and brooder space plays a huge role in prevention. Once your chick

goes home with you then the burden of keeping them safe and healthy is on your shoulders. Please inspect your chick fully on site before accepting this responsibility. Newly hatched chicks are very wobbly and unsure on their feet. Confining their space is beneficial to keep them from slipping or running as they develop and build those leg muscles so consider confining them in a footprint no larger than a standard oval stock tank that is 2'x 4'. Cover the flooring well with layers of bedding so that your chick cannot slip on any slick surfaces underneath them. I've seen breeders recommend puppy pads, no slip shelf liners, towels, etc as a base covered with bedding materials of pine shavings, straw and other materials. Again, the choice you make will be determined by your own research but NEVER allow your baby emu onto a slick surface such as concrete, wood, tile or laminate floor, especially with space to run. That's just asking for trouble and chances that you can correct a case of splayed leg after it's happened are very slim. Prevention is key. Lastly, is a completely subjective item that I would like to add that is just my own personal opinion. I have brooded three groups of chicks over the last three years. Two were individual chicks, which are my current two breeding birds. The third was a trio of chicks that I hatched and brooded as a clutch and I learned that I really prefer brooding chicks individually. I feel individually the chicks bond best to their human owners and look forward to your visits rather than being skiddish and afraid as they do in a group where they bond with one another. I find they startle and run away less, avoiding issues around splay leg, and as adults they are easier to handle, move, and care for once they reach their adult size and strength. For clarification, this is not me saying only own one emu. This species prefers companionship so I do suggest owning more than one bird. But I prefer allowing them to bond with humans first before they bond with other emus.

Careful consideration, preplanning and education should give you a great start to becoming an emu owner! Thank you for buying from us here at Olive Branch Farm!