

THE COMPLETE CHICKEN RAISING PLAYBOOK

*From Egg to Flock Without
Losing Your Mind*





PREFACE

From Zia's Coop (and Kitchen)

Ciao, *tesoro*.

If you're holding this book, chances are you've either decided to raise chickens or already have a flock plotting your downfall.

Either way — welcome to the madness.

When I incubated my first batch of eggs, I thought it would be peaceful. A little hum of the incubator, some fluffy chicks, maybe a spiritual awakening. Instead, I got sleepless nights, humidity paranoia, and a brooder that smelled like something had died and then taken up smoking.

But here's the thing: raising chickens is magic. It's life, science, comedy, and chaos all in one feathery package. Every peep, flap, and dramatic faint teaches you something — mostly patience, sometimes thermodynamics.





This playbook isn't written by a faceless farm influencer with perfect lighting and a spotless coop. It's written by someone who's cried over late hatches, hand-fed underdogs, and accidentally raised a rooster who thinks he's a cat. Inside, you'll find the honest, step-by-step version of chicken keeping:

- The science you need to get it right.
- The trackers and charts to keep you sane.
- And the sass to keep it fun when nothing goes according to plan (which it won't).

So pour yourself something strong — espresso, Prosecco, whatever your soul needs — and let's turn those fragile little eggs into a flock that'll bring you joy, breakfast, and endless gossip.

Feathers, fiascos, and fondness,

Zia Paola 🍷

Chief Chaos Officer, Chicken Division





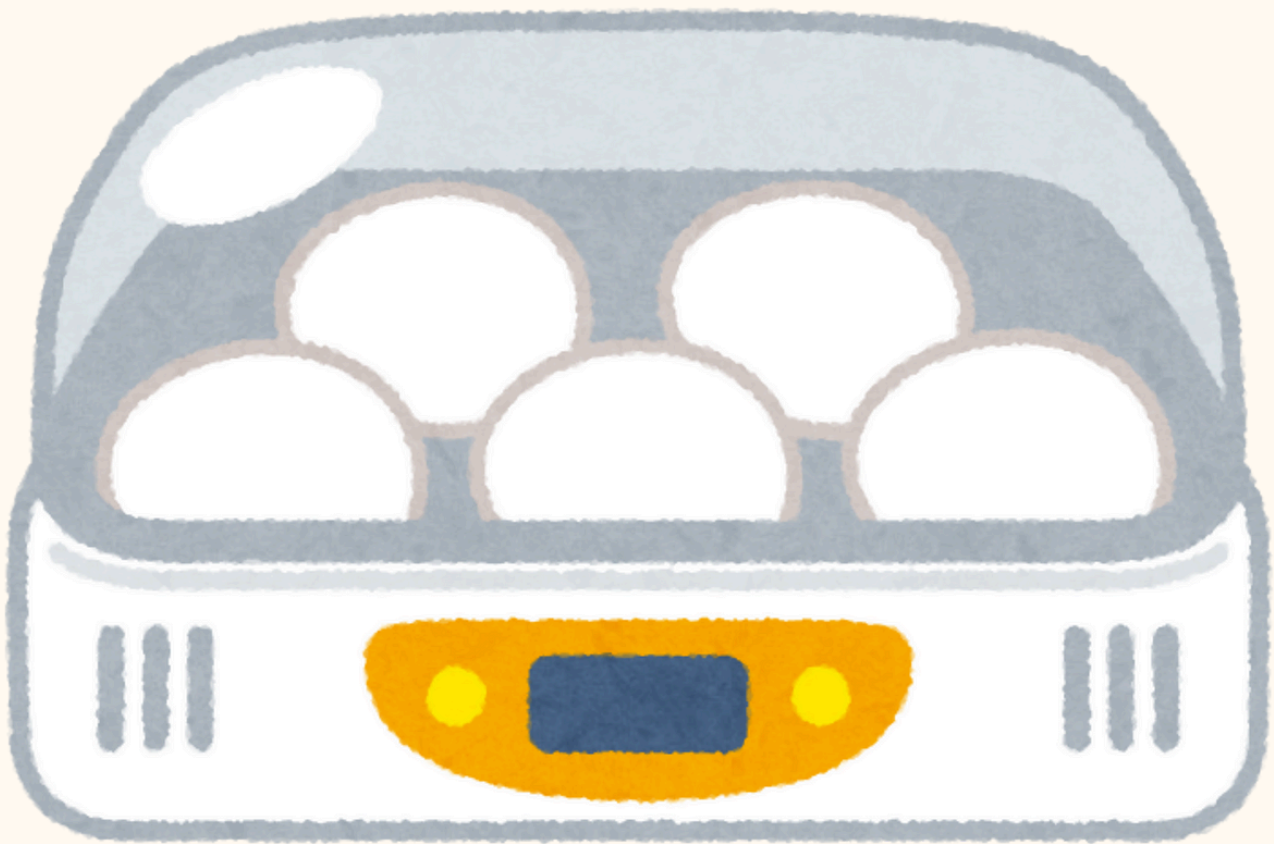
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INCUBATION DEEP-DIVE

Daily timeline, hatch tracker, and troubleshooting guide.



ZIA SAYS: DON'T PANIC IF NOTHING HAPPENS TILL DAY 21—CHICKS ARE FASHIONABLY LATE.

- 
- **Day 1:** Set eggs in incubator at 37.5°C, 50% of humidity - *Mark eggs (X and O) to track turning.*
 - **Day 2-6:** Turn eggs 3-5 times daily - *Be gentle, wash hands before handling*
 - **Day 7:** Candle eggs - *Remove clear/unfertilized eggs*
 - **Day 8-13:** Continue turning eggs 3-5 times daily - *Maintain temperature & humidity*
 - **Day 14:** Candle again - *Remove dead/quitters*
 - **Day 15-17:** Keep turning - *Prepare for lockdown*
 - **Day 18:** Lockdown! Stop turning increase humidity to 65-70% - *Chicks position for hatch*
 - **Days 19-20:** Do not open incubator - *Chicks may start pipping (small cracks)*
 - **Day 21:** Hatch Day! - *Do not help unless absolutely necessary*
- 

Troubleshooting Common Hatch Problems



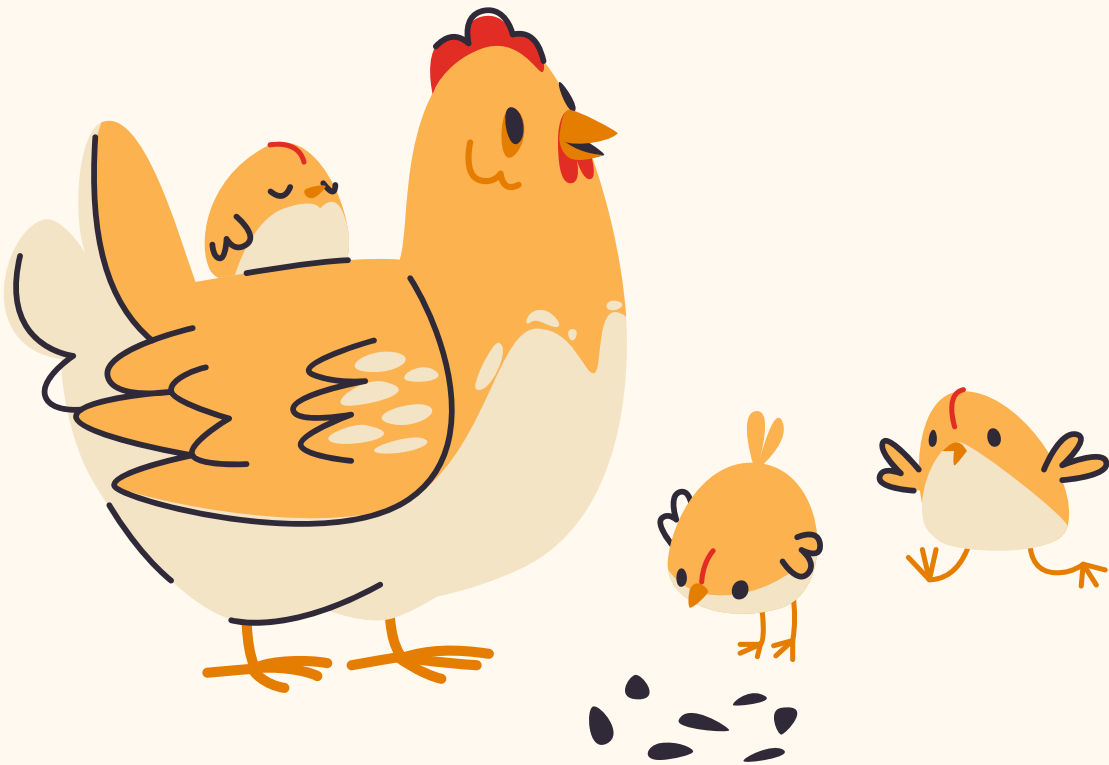
- Low fertility rate: Use eggs under 7 days old, healthy rooster, store at 12–15°C.
- Early embryo death: Sanitize incubator, stabilize temps, wash hands before handling.
- Late embryo death: Increase humidity during lockdown, ensure ventilation.
- Chick pipped but not hatching: Don't intervene unless 24h overdue and distressed.
- Deformed chicks: Feed breeder flock properly, check incubator calibration.

ZIA SAYS: HALF OF HATCHING IS SCIENCE, HALF IS NOT PANICKING WHEN EGGS WIGGLE.



BROODER TO READY FOR THE BACKYARD 0-6 WEEKS

Heating, bedding, feeding, and weekly
checklists.

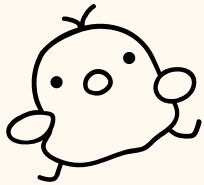


***ZIA SAYS: IF CHICKS HUDDLE—THEY'RE
COLD. IF THEY SCATTER—THEY'RE HOT.
SIMPLE.***

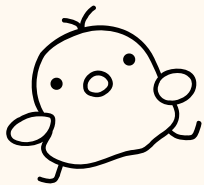


WEEKLY CHECKLIST

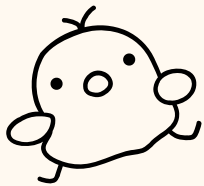
0-6 WEEKS



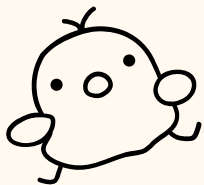
Week 1: Check temperature daily.
Fresh bedding every 2-3 days. Show chicks water



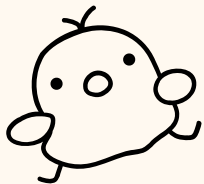
Week 2: Lower heat. Add perch.
Watch for pasty butt



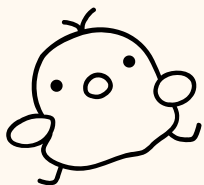
Week 3: Offer outings on warm days.
Increase feeder space



Week 4: Add enrichment (small cabbage, toys). Reduce heat further



Week 5: Bigger brooder. Feather growth nearly complete



Week 6: Fully feathered. Prepare for outdoor move





- Heating: Start at 32–35°C, drop ~3°C per week until room temp.
- Bedding: Use pine shavings, chopped straw, or hemp. Avoid newspaper.
- Feeding: 0–6 weeks: chick starter (18–20% protein).
- Space: Week 1: shoebox for 6 chicks. Week 6: 1 sq. ft. each.



JUVENILE STAGE

6-12 WEEKS

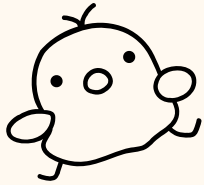
Feeding, space, behaviour, enrichment, and weekly tasks.



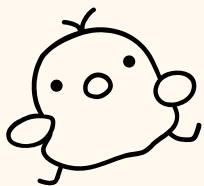
ZIA SAYS: CRISPS ARE NOT CHICKEN TREATS. STICK TO GREENS.



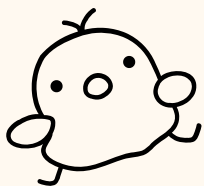
WEEKLY CHECKLIST 7-12 WEEKS



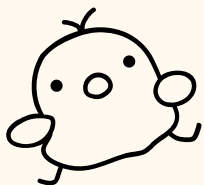
Week 7: Transition to grower feed.
Provide grits if treats given.



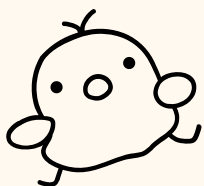
Week 8: Increase space. Supervised outdoor time.



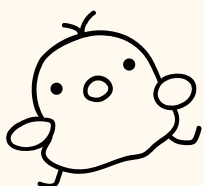
Week 9: Begin flock familiarisation.
Watch out for bullying



Week 10: Pullets show adult feathers.
Roosters may crow



Week 11: Encourage roosting. Add higher perches



Week 12: Strong and hardy. Ready for flock integration



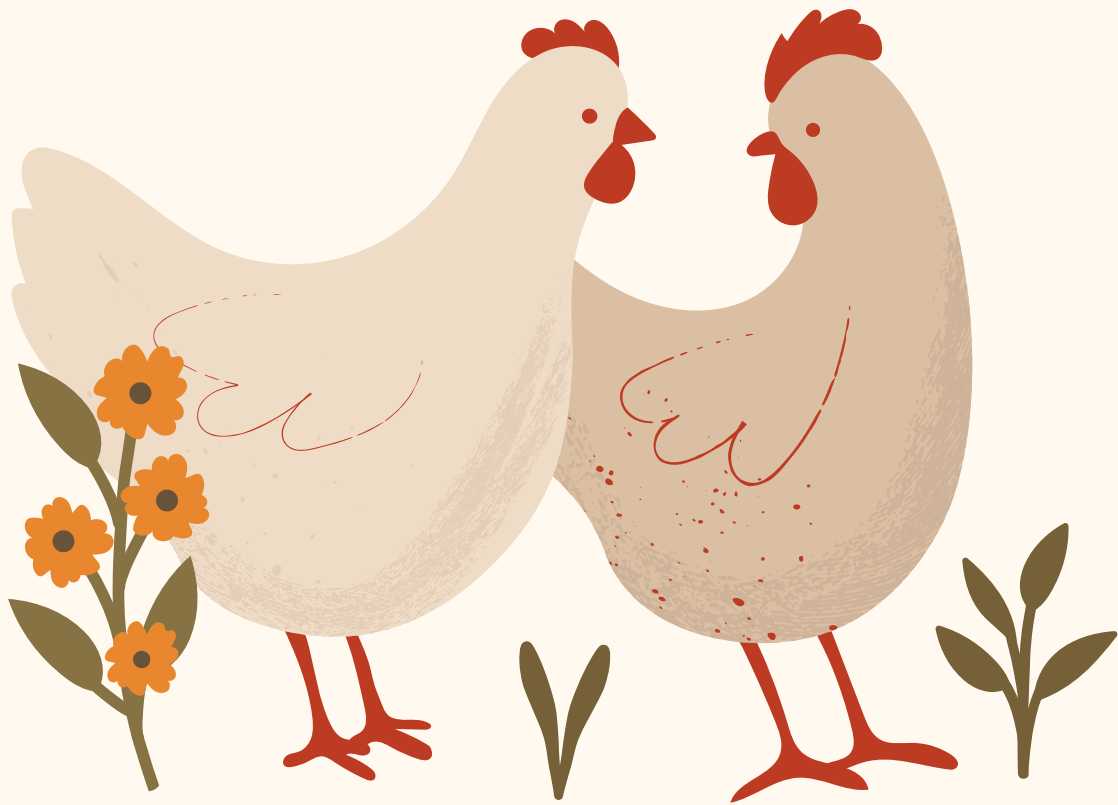


- Switch fully to grower feed (16–18% protein)
- Introduce greens and safe treats ($\leq 10\%$ of diet)
- Always provide grit if feeding treats
- Raise feeders & waterers to reduce mess.
- Indoor: 2–3 sq. ft. per bird
- Outdoor: 8–10 sq. ft. per bird
- Add roost bars for training adult coop habits
- Provide safe shelter from weather & predators.



INTEGRATION WITH ADULTS (12–16+ WEEKS)

Readiness signs, step-by-step method,
troubleshooting, and checklist.



***ZIA SAYS: DON'T TOSS A SCRAWNY
TEEN INTO THE COOP TOO SOON.***



- Fully feathered, hardy, confident eaters/drinkers
- 12–16 weeks old minimum
- Able to hold their own in minor squabbles
- Look but don't touch: House juveniles in a nearby pen (Week 12–14)
- Supervised mingling: Short free-range sessions together (Week 14–16)
- Gradual increase: Longer mingling daily; expect some chasing
- Full integration: Move to main coop once aggression minimal



PRINTABLE TRACKERS & LOGS

Hatch Rate • Brooder Cleaning • Feed & Weight
• Vet Notes



Hatch Rate Tracker

Date set	No Eggs set	Fertile	Hatched	Fertility % (No Fertile eggs/ No Eggs set) x 100	Hatch % (No Hatched eggs/No Fertile eggs) x 100



Brooder Cleaning Log

Date	Tasks Done	Y/N	Products Used	Notes
	Bedding changed			
	Water cleaned			
	Feeder scrubbed			
	Heat source checked			

Zia says: If the brooder smells like doom, you waited too long to clean

Feed & Weight Log

Date	Chick ID	Feed Type (Starter or Grower)	Weight (g)	Notes

Zia says: Weighing chicks is optional—but bragging about their gains is encouraged.

Vet & Health Notes

Date	Chick ID	Symptoms	Treatment / Meds	Outcome	Follow-up

Zia says: Write everything down. Future you will thank present you when chaos hits.

PERSONAL CHICK PROFILES

Track Growth • Add Photos • Notes on
Temperament & Health



Chick Profile



Name / ID:	
Breed:	
Hatch Date:	
Temperament Notes:	



Chick Profile



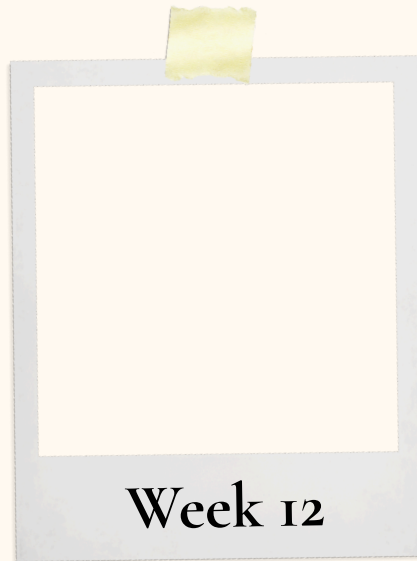
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Breed:	
Hatch Date:	
Temperament Notes:	



Chick Profile



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Breed:	
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Chick Profile



Name / ID:	
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Hatch Date:	
Temperament Notes:	



Chick Profile



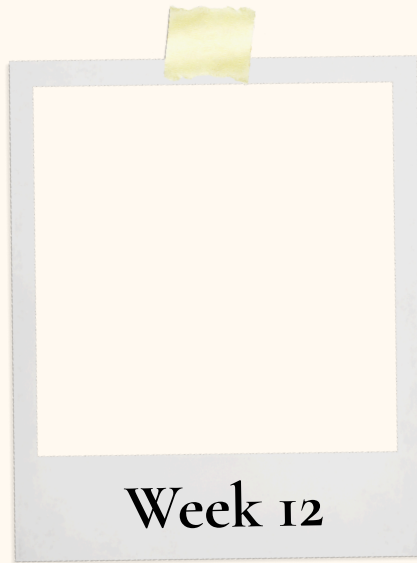
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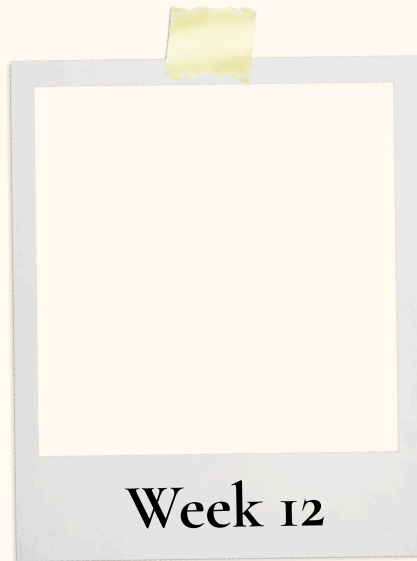
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Chick Profile



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Chick Profile



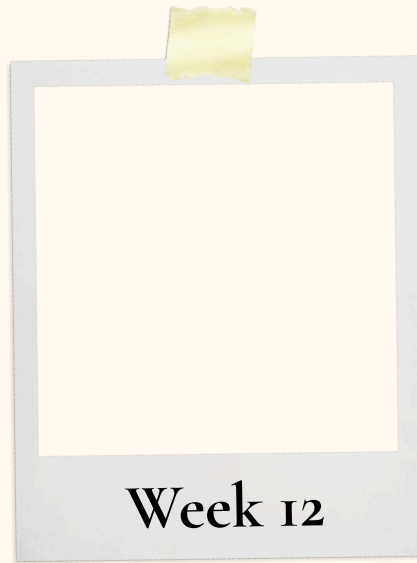
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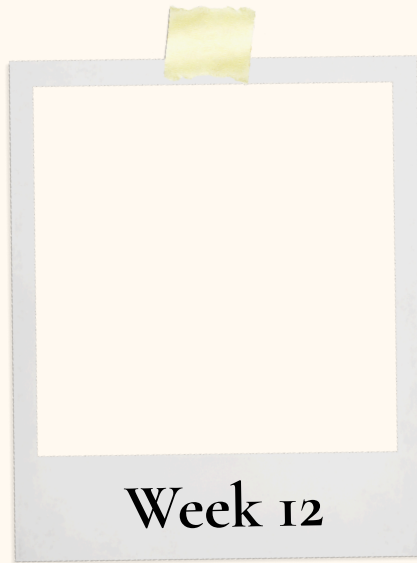
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Chick Profile



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BONUS SECTIONS FOR CHICKEN KEEPERS

Drama Decoder • Quick Reference Charts •
Emergency Tips





Chicken Drama Decoder

- **Loud cheeping:** I'm cold, lost, hungry—or just being dramatic.
- **Wing flapping:** Practicing flight, stretching muscles, or declaring dominance.
- **Feather pecking:** Establishing the pecking order. Mild scuffles = normal.
- **Dust bathing:** Not a problem. It's their spa day in the dirt.
- **Sleeping flat:** No, they're not dead. Just extra dramatic nappers.

Zia says: If your chicks are noisy, 80% of the time they want food, warmth, or attention. The other 20% they're just yelling at life.



Quick Reference Charts

Temperature Drop Schedule

Week	Temperature
Week 1	32–35°C (90–95°F)
Week 2	29–32°C (85–90°F)
Week 3	26–29°C (80–85°F)
Week 4	23–26°C (75–80°F)
Week 5	20–23°C (70–75°F)
Week 6	Room temperature

Feed Type by Age

Age	Feed Type
0–6 weeks	Chick Starter (18–20% protein)
6–16 weeks	Grower (16–18% protein)
16+ weeks	Layer feed (with calcium for egg production)

Space Requirements

Age	Space Needed
0–6 weeks	1 sq. ft. per chick indoors
6–12 weeks	2–3 sq. ft. per chick indoors
12+ weeks	4 sq. ft. per chicken in coop, 8–10 sq. ft. in run



Emergency Tips

- **Chick looks weak:** Offer electrolytes + warmth. Separate if bullied.
- **Hatch stalled:** Don't peel eggs too soon. Only assist after 24h overdue & chick in distress.
- **Flock rejects new birds:** Use see-but-don't-touch pens, introduce gradually, add distractions (hang veggies).
- **Sick chick:** Isolate immediately, provide warmth, consult a vet if possible.
- **Injury / blood drawn:** Separate, clean wound, reintroduce once healed.

Zia says: Chickens are resilient little dinosaurs. Stay calm, act fast, and don't Google at 2am—you'll only panic more.






Conclusion: The Last Feather Falls

If you've made it to the end of this Playbook, congratulations — you officially know more about chickens than 90% of people who think eggs just appear in cartons.

You've learned how to nurture life inside a shell, keep tiny fluff balls alive in a brooder, survive the hormonal chaos of chicken adolescence, and unite a flock without losing your sanity. That's no small thing. It's a mix of patience, intuition, and a little bit of witchcraft.

There will be mistakes. You'll forget to turn an egg, underestimate how fast chicks grow, or introduce new hens too soon. It's okay.

Chickens forgive faster than humans do — especially if snacks are involved.






This Playbook isn't the end. It's your foundation. Every hatch, squawk, and feathered feud will teach you something new. And someday, when you see your hens sunbathing like tiny divas or a rooster proudly calling the flock to breakfast, you'll realize it was all worth it.

So take a deep breath. You've got this. Now go feed your chaos crew — and yourself.

— Zia Paola 🐔

Head Hen of Controlled Mayhem






The Complete Chicken Raising Playbook

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