



Caring for Chicks with Pasty Butt

By Lisa Steele

If you are new to caring for baby chicks, be aware of a potentially life-threatening but easily treatable condition that is fairly common, affecting mainly shipped day-old chicks.

Pasty butt is a condition in which feces get stuck in the baby chick's vent and literally stop up the chick so it can't excrete its poop. It can kill the chick fairly quickly if not treated immediately, so knowing how to treat this condition is important.

Pasty butt is usually caused by stress or extreme temperature changes, such as those often endured by baby chicks during the rigorous travel from the hatchery to your post office. Shipped chicks are far more susceptible to pasty butt than those you purchase from a local farm or hatch yourself, but it's good practice

to check all your newly hatched or acquired chicks for it. Of all the sick chick symptoms you might encounter, pasty butt is one of the easiest to treat.

Pasty Butt Treatment – Once you get your chicks home, check each chick one by one for pasty butt and gently clean any poop stuck on their vents with a cotton swab moistened with warm water or warmed vegetable or olive oil and then smear a bit of oil around the vent area. Continue to check their little butts for the first few days for pasting up, several times a day if you have any chicks currently suffering from pasty butt, and continue to swab to keep the vent area nice and clean. Since chicks are not able to regulate their body temperature and can chill easily and die, don't wet any more

of the chick than necessary; just remove any stuck-on feces. That's why I recommend using a cotton swab which greatly reduces the area actually moistened.

Pasty Butt Prevention – Feeding the chicks a bit of cornmeal or ground raw oatmeal mixed into their regular chick feed can help prevent and/or clear up pasty Butt. Provide chick-sized grit if you feed your chicks anything other than chick feed. Chicks are extremely susceptible to diarrhea, which can exacerbate pasty butt symptoms, so keep the bedding dry and change out wet litter that might be harboring *E. coli* or other bacteria. Probiotic powder mixed into their feed can help balance the good-to-bad bacteria ratio in their intestinal tracts and help prevent diarrhea.