Day-old chick guide: from hatchery to farm

Choosing, ordering, transporting and receiving your chicks: the right steps, from the Agnibilékrou hatchery to the end of the first week

Benchmarks: Cobb (Broiler Management Guide) and NEXTEKCI Training lessons · NEXTEKCI hatchery, Agnibilékrou



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1. Hatchery work in brief

A hen's egg takes 21 days to hatch. The hatchery's job is to recreate, over those 21 days, the conditions of a good broody hen (warmth, humidity, egg turning), then to grade, count and box the chicks so that they leave in the best possible condition.

From egg to box

1. Hatching eggs: they are selected before incubation (clean, intact, of regular shape and size).
2. Incubation: for 21 days, temperature, humidity and egg turning are monitored constantly.
3. Hatching: just before leaving the egg, the chick absorbs the rest of its yolk. This reserve feeds it during its first hours and during the journey.
4. Hand grading: every chick is graded by hand; only lively, well-formed chicks leave the hatchery.
5. Counting and boxing: the chicks are placed in ventilated boxes of 50, labelled with chick type and date.
6. Departure: collection at the hatchery, or evening departure with the professional carriers, so that the chicks travel in the cool hours.



Hatching eggs selected before incubation, at the NEXTEKCI hatchery in Agnibilékrou.



The incubation room: temperature, humidity and egg turning controlled right up to hatching.



Hand grading at hatch: dedicated work clothes, hair cover and mask for handling chicks.

> Tip: A day-old chick has not yet eaten or drunk: it lives on its yolk reserve. This is enough for the journey, provided it suffers neither heat, nor cold, nor lack of air. On arrival, the sooner it drinks, the better it starts.

2. The six NEXTEKCI chicks

The Agnibilékrou hatchery produces six types of day-old chicks, sold in boxes of 50. The right choice depends on your market, your poultry house and how long you can wait before selling.

White broiler

- Fast-growing broiler (Cobb 500 type)
- Sold at around 35 to 45 days
- Needs a well-run house, a complete feed and a buyer ready on time



Red broiler

- Hardy coloured chicken, often called "red chicken"
- Copes better with heat
- Longer cycle than the white broiler, firm, popular meat



Barred grey

- Dark coloured chicken, very hardy
- Suited to free-range and simple houses
- Longer cycle than the white broiler



Hybrid

- Balance between growth and hardiness
- Firm meat
- Longer cycle than the white broiler



White cockerel

- Males of a laying strain
- An affordable option to get started
- Lighter than a broiler: target the right customers



Brown laying hen

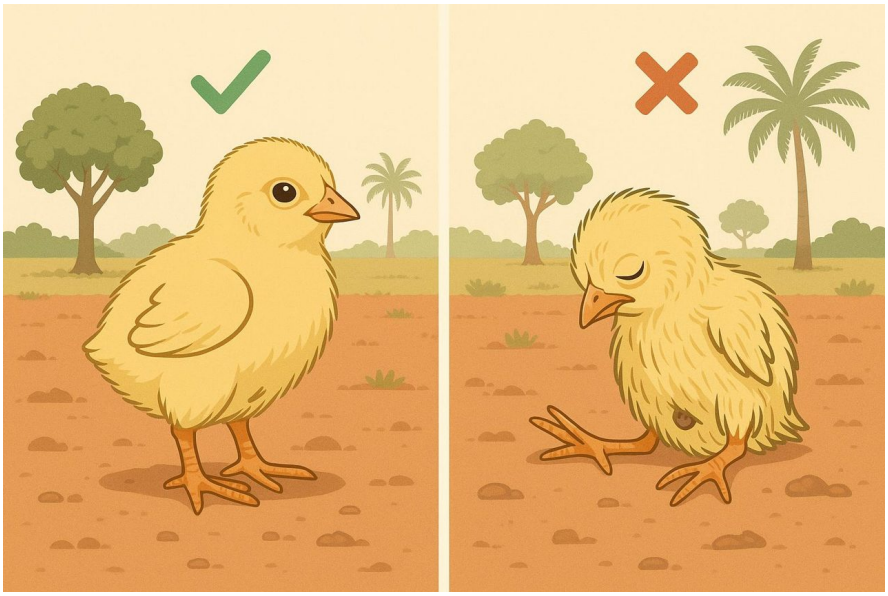
- For egg production
- Vaccinated against Marek's disease at the hatchery
- Long cycle: several months of rearing before the first eggs



Tip: For a first flock, choose a type that forgives mistakes: a coloured chicken or a cockerel lets you learn the trade with limited risk. An adviser will help you choose on WhatsApp at +225 05 44 83 27 79.

3. How to spot a good chick

A good chick can be recognised in a few seconds, when the box is opened. First look at the batch as a whole, then pick up a few chicks from several boxes.



Left, a good chick: alert, dry down, well-closed navel, straight legs. Right, a weak chick. — NEXTEKCI illustration



Day-old chicks at the NEXTEKCI hatchery in Agnibilékrou.

What makes a good chick

Point	Good chick	Report it
Activity	Lively, standing, alert, reacts to sound and light	Lying down, sleepy, does not get up when put down
Eyes	Round, bright, wide open	Half-closed, dull
Navel	Fully healed, dry, covered with down	Open, wet, dark, or with a remnant sticking out
Legs	Bright and waxy to the touch, straight; hocks not red	Dry and wrinkled (thirsty chick), red hocks, crooked toes
Down	Dry, long, clean and fluffy	Matted, dirty or wet
Shape	Well-formed body, straight beak and neck	Crossed beak, twisted neck, crooked legs
Size	Chicks of even size in the box	Many small chicks, very uneven batch

Source: Cobb (Broiler Management Guide)

Checking the boxes when you open them

- Listen: a healthy batch cheeps gently and steadily.
- Look: the chicks stand up, spread out and explore as soon as they are put down.
- Pick up a few chicks from several boxes: eyes, navel, legs, down.
- Weigh a sample (about 5% of the boxes) to know the starting weight: this is the reference for judging weight on day 7.
- Write down straight away any chicks found dead or weak when the boxes are opened.

Tip: A well-graded batch is even: chicks of the same size start together and grow together. If anything worries you when you open the boxes, take photos and a short video and send them the same day to +225 05 44 83 27 79.

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4. Ordering your chicks

The date fits the poultry house, not the other way round. Order when you know your house will be cleaned, disinfected, dry and equipped the day before arrival, and that your buyers will be ready at selling age.

Ordering at a glance

Question	Answer
How do I order?	On WhatsApp at +225 07 07 72 78 67
What information is needed?	The chick type, the quantity in boxes of 50, your town or collection point, the date you want
What is the minimum?	50 chicks (1 box) for collection at the Agnibilékrou hatchery; 200 chicks (4 boxes) for delivery by carrier
When should I order?	At least 15 days before departure; 3 to 4 weeks ahead in busy periods, especially before festive seasons
Which days do the chicks leave?	Monday and Thursday evening, arriving on Tuesday and Friday morning along the routes
What about the price?	An adviser confirms the price of the day when you order; paying in advance secures your place in the schedule

How many chicks should I order?

- According to the size of the house: do not exceed the recommended stocking density for your production (see the housing guide).
- According to your buyers: a white broiler flock must be sold at the planned age, because every day of delay costs feed.
- According to your cash flow: budget for feed, heating, litter and the vet for the whole flock, not only the chicks.
- For a first flock, start small: you learn the trade better with 200 to 500 birds.

> Tip: Before confirming, arrange the vehicle, the person who will receive the chicks and a phone number that can be reached on the night of departure: coordination with the carrier is done on WhatsApp.

The poultry housing and equipment guide: stocking densities and equipment: www.nextekci.com/en/school/guides/poultry-housing-and-equipment

5. Transport: three routes, and everywhere in Côte d'Ivoire

NEXTEKCI does not transport its chicks itself. Professional carriers run three fixed routes from Agnibilékrou. The carrier tells you his rate per box, which you pay to him directly.

The three routes

Route	Itinerary
Route 1	Agnibilékrou -> Daoukro -> Bouaké
Route 2	Agnibilékrou -> Bongouanou -> Dimbokro -> Yamoussoukro -> Bouaflé -> Daloa
Route 3	Agnibilékrou -> Abengourou -> Akoupé -> Adzopé -> Abidjan (Yopougon)

NEXTEKCI chicks are available throughout Côte d'Ivoire. If your town is not on a route, you have three options:

- Collection at the Agnibilékrou hatchery, from 50 chicks.
- Collection on arrival of the nearest route, at the point agreed with the carrier.
- Your own carrier, who collects the chicks at the hatchery or on arrival of a route.

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Where to collect your chicks, by region

Region	Example towns	Collection point
East, from Agnibilékrou to Bouna and beyond	Koun-Fao, Tanda, Bondoukou, Nassian, Bouna	At the Agnibilékrou hatchery
North	Korhogo, Ferkessédougou, Odienné, Katiola	Route 1 in Bouaké
Centre-East	Prikro, M'Bahiakro, Bocanda	Route 1 in Daoukro
Centre	Toumodi, Tiébissou, Sinfra, Oumé	Route 2 in Yamoussoukro or Bouaflé
West and Centre-West	Man, Duékoué, Séguéla, Gagnoa	Route 2 in Daloa
South and coast	San-Pédro, Divo, Agboville, Grand-Bassam, Aboisso	Route 3 in Abidjan (Yopougon)



Ventilated boxes of 50 chicks, labelled with chick type and date, ready for collection or transport.

Tip: Stay reachable on the night of departure and the morning of arrival: the carrier cannot wait. Be at the collection point before the agreed time, with a vehicle ready and a shady spot for the boxes.

See the routes, towns and collection points: www.nextekci.com/en/delivery

6. Transporting chicks properly

The journey is the most fragile moment in a chick's life. It can go a few hours without food or water thanks to its yolk, but it cannot cope with heat, cold or lack of air. These rules apply to the carrier and to the trip between the collection point and your farm.



Transport: ventilated boxes, spaced stacks, covered and ventilated vehicle, never in the sun. — NEXTEKCI illustration

The rules of transport

The rule	Why
Covered, ventilated vehicle, never a closed car boot	Chicks give off a lot of heat: without air, they suffocate
Never in the sun, nor on the roof of a vehicle	The sun heats the boxes within minutes; rain and wind chill them
Air between the boxes, no closed tarpaulin on top	The holes in the boxes must stay clear so that air can flow
No long stops, especially in full sun	In a stationary vehicle, the air stops moving and the heat builds up fast
Travel in the cool hours and go straight to the farm	That is why departures are in the evening; every hour lost delays the first drink
No exhaust fumes or smoke near the boxes	Chicks are very sensitive to them
No water or feed during the journey	The chick lives on its yolk; water spilt in the box wets and chills it
Boxes wedged flat, gentle driving	A box that slides or tips over injures the chicks and piles them up

During the journey, listen and look

- Chicks cheeping loudly and huddling: they are cold. Close the openings exposed to the wind, without cutting off the air to the boxes.
- Silent chicks, beaks open, wings held away from the body: they are too hot. Ventilate at once, move to the shade, space the boxes out.
- Calm chicks cheeping gently: all is well.

Tip: The classic trap: leaving the boxes in the sun at the collection point while looking for a vehicle. Come with the vehicle ready, and put the boxes in the shade as soon as they are unloaded.

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7. Preparing for arrival

The chicks must arrive in a house that is already ready: clean, disinfected, dry and warm. On the day of arrival, it is too late to warm up a cold floor. Up to 5 days of age, a chick cannot regulate its own temperature: the floor and air you prepare are what keep it warm.

The countdown

1. Between flocks: cleaning, disinfection and downtime completed, house dry.
2. A few days before: clean, dry litter in place, chick guard (brooding ring) set up around the heat source, equipment checked, starter feed in stock.
3. At least 48 hours before: switch on the heating, so that floor, air and humidity are stable 24 hours before arrival.
4. The day before: check the temperature at chick height (32 to 34 °C at the edge of the brooder) and the warmth of the floor.
5. Two hours before: fill the drinkers with clean water at room temperature, never ice-cold; set out the trays and paper.
6. On arrival: soft lighting, and one person ready to unload, count and record.

Brooding equipment

Point	Benchmark
Drinkers	14 to 16 per 1,000 chicks, including mini-drinkers for the first days
Trays or paper	1 tray per 50 chicks; on paper, about 50 to 65 g of feed per chick
Floor temperature	At least 32 °C; about 40 °C directly under the brooders
Draughts	None at chick level up to 14 days
Feed and water	Never directly under the heat source

Source: Cobb (Broiler Management Guide)

> Tip: Never close a house heated with gas or charcoal completely: they use up oxygen and give off gases. Always keep a high opening to renew the air.

Preparing the house step by step: the poultry housing and equipment guide:
www.nextekci.com/en/school/guides/poultry-housing-and-equipment

8. Receiving the chicks, step by step

From the collection point to the first drink

1. At the collection point: check the number of boxes and the batch labelling (type, date). Put the boxes in the shade and set off at once.
2. At the farm: carry the boxes straight into the heated house; never leave them outside.
3. Open the boxes calmly, one at a time, inside the chick guard, in soft lighting.
4. Place the chicks gently near the water, spread evenly across the brooding area; do not tip the boxes out in a heap.
5. Count and write it down at once on the record sheet: chicks received, dead on arrival, weak chicks set aside.
6. Water first: dip the beaks of a few chicks in the drinker, the others will follow.
7. Starter feed (fine crumbs) one to two hours later, on the trays and paper.
8. Bring the lighting back to normal once all the chicks are placed, then check all equipment 1 to 2 hours later.

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Arrival: place the chicks gently in the heated ring, close to water and feed. — NEXTEKCI illustration

Mistakes to avoid

- Giving ice-cold water "to cool them down": the chicks do not drink and get chilled.
- Opening the boxes outside, in the sun or the wind.
- Leaving the boxes closed inside the house while you finish preparing.
- Giving an antibiotic "as a precaution": no treatment without the vet's advice.

A little sugar dissolved in the water for the first few hours (about two tablespoons per litre) helps the chicks recover from the journey. Vitamins or anti-stress products: only on the advice of your vet or your adviser, never at random.

> Tip: A problem on arrival? Send photos and a short video on WhatsApp to +225 05 44 83 27 79 the same day. NEXTEKCI technical support follows you for the 72 hours after delivery.

9. The first 72 hours

The first three days decide the flock. A chick that drinks, eats and sleeps warm from the first night becomes an even, healthy bird; a chick that has been cold, thirsty or frightened keeps a delay that is never fully made up.

Diagram: Watch your chicks 1 to 2 hours after arrival, then every two hours on the first night: where they sit tells you whether the heat is right. (see it in colour at www.nextekci.com/en/school/guides/day-old-chicks-from-hatchery-to-farm) — Adapted from Cobb (Broiler Management Guide)

Reading how the chicks spread out

What you see	What it means	What you do
Chicks huddled in a ball under the heat, cheeping loudly	They are cold	Lower the brooder or increase the heat, close the curtains, stop draughts
Chicks pressed against the edges of the guard, away from the heat, beaks open, wings held out	They are too hot	Raise the brooder or reduce the heat, ventilate
All the chicks on one side	A draught is coming from the other side	Find and block the source of the draught
Chicks spread everywhere, moving, drinking, eating, cheeping gently	All is well	Change nothing, note the time and temperature

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Checks in the first days

When	The check	Good result
4 to 6 hours after arrival	Hold the feet of a few chicks against your neck or cheek	Warm feet; cold feet = floor too cold
8 hours after arrival	Feel the crop of 20 chicks taken from several places	At least 8 out of 10 full and soft
24 hours after arrival	Same crop check	More than 9 out of 10 full and soft (Cobb aims for 95%)
Day 7	Weigh a sample	A well-started white broiler weighs about 4 times its arrival weight

Benchmarks: NEXTEKCI Training lessons and Cobb (Broiler Management Guide)

Reading the crop

- Crop full and soft: the chick has drunk and eaten. Perfect.
- Crop full and hard: it has eaten but not drunk enough. Move the drinkers closer, check the water temperature.
- Crop empty: it has found neither water nor feed. Check the lighting, the number of trays, the height of the drinkers, the heat.

Temperature at chick height

Age	Under the brooder	In the rest of the area
Days 1 to 3	32 to 34 °C	28 to 30 °C
Days 4 to 7	30 to 32 °C	27 to 29 °C
Days 8 to 14	28 to 30 °C	26 to 28 °C
After 14 days	Lower by 2 to 3 °C per week	Down to the outside temperature

Benchmarks: NEXTEKCI Training lessons (levels 1 and 2)

Nights, weak chicks, the record sheet

- On the first night, someone sleeps near the house and checks every two hours: temperature, how the chicks are spread, water, gas or power.
- On the next two nights, one check at midnight and one at dawn are enough if all is well.
- Weak chicks are put in a small separate space, kept warm, with water and feed within reach.
- The water is changed several times a day; feed is given in small, frequent amounts so that it stays fresh.
- On the record sheet, every day: morning and evening temperature, water drunk, feed given, deaths, weak chicks, observations.

Tip: Always look at the chicks before reading the thermometer: the thermometer gives a figure, the chicks tell the truth. A heating failure at 2 a.m., discovered at 6 a.m., costs chicks smothered in piles.

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10. First-week mortality

A few losses in the first week are normal: the journey, weak chicks, the start. What matters is not having zero deaths but spotting an excess on the same day. The percentage is calculated on the number of chicks received: 15 deaths out of 1,000 chicks = 1.5%.

Normal or abnormal

Benchmark	Normal	Warning
First week, in total	1 to 1.5% (journey, start, weak chicks)	More than 2% in total at 7 days
A single day, after day 1	A few isolated deaths	More than 1% in one day
Crops at 24 hours	More than 9 chicks out of 10 with a full, soft crop	Empty crop in more than 1 chick out of 5

Benchmarks: NEXTEKCI Training lessons (levels 1 and 2)

The most common causes

What you see	Likely cause	What to do
Weak chicks with dry, wrinkled legs, deaths in the first days	Journey too hot or too long, first drink too late	Water at once; check that every chick finds the drinkers
Chicks found crushed in piles in the morning	Cold or heating failure during the night	Night watch, heating checked, draughts blocked
Chicks pressed against the edges, beaks open, deaths in the hot hours	Too hot	Raise the brooder or reduce the heat, ventilate
Stunted chicks, empty crops	They have not found the water or the feed	More trays, drinkers at the right height, enough light
Inflamed or wet navel, deaths that drag on	Possible infection	Call the vet: treatment only on his prescription
Red or very watery droppings in many chicks	Possible health problem	Call the vet the same day

Call the vet in your area or a NEXTEKCI adviser as soon as

- Mortality exceeds 1% in one day, after the first day.
- The chicks stay listless despite the right heat.
- Droppings are red or very watery in many chicks.
- The crop is still empty in more than 1 chick out of 5 at 24 hours.

Tip: From day one, write down the number received, the deaths on arrival and the deaths each day: these figures are your flock's starting point. With photos and a short video, they allow quick advice. Waiting one more day has never helped.

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11. Vaccination

Brown laying chicks are vaccinated against Marek's disease at the hatchery (certificate on request). The other chicks (white broilers, red broilers, barred grey, hybrids, cockerels) receive no vaccine at the hatchery: vaccination is done on the farm, following the protocol of the vet in your area.

What this means for you

- Choose the vet in your area before the chicks arrive: he sets the vaccination protocol for your farm.
- For brown laying hens, ask for the Marek's disease vaccination certificate and keep it with the flock record.
- A vaccine is kept cold, between 2 and 8 °C, never in the sun; an opened vial is used at once.
- Record every vaccination on the sheet: name, batch number, date, number of birds, who gave it.

Tip: A vaccine only protects a well-run flock: warmth, clean water, dry litter and biosecurity remain your chicks' first protection.

The poultry health and biosecurity guide: www.nextekci.com/en/school/guides/poultry-health-and-biosecurity

12. Ordering and getting advice

NEXTEKCI contacts

For	Contact
Ordering chicks	WhatsApp +225 07 07 72 78 67
A technical question, a problem on arrival	WhatsApp +225 05 44 83 27 79
Collecting at the hatchery	NEXTEKCI hatchery, Agnibilékrou
Opening hours	Monday to Saturday, 9 a.m. – 12 noon and 2 p.m. – 6 p.m.; Sunday, 9 a.m. – 12 noon
Maria, the online assistant	Any time on www.nextekci.com

Order your chicks on WhatsApp: https://wa.me/2250707727867

See the routes and collection points: www.nextekci.com/en/delivery

Ask an adviser a technical question: https://wa.me/2250544832779

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