

Easter is coming up and we want to caution against getting or giving baby chickens, ducks or rabbits as pets for children for Easter. Why? Thousands of these baby animals end up dying of neglect or injury from un-prepared or uncommitted owners and that simply is not in keeping with the message of Easter.

Raising chickens, ducks or rabbits can be quite rewarding but are you prepared for the fact that baby chicks and ducklings need to be kept at 95 degrees the first week of their life, 90 the next, and so on, until they are 4-5 weeks old and fully feathered? The ideal source of heat is a red heat bulb, and you'll want a thermometer in their cage along with their own special food and fresh water at all times, bedding, shelter & space to grow.

Ducks, of course, need a good and safe area to spend time in water. Once grown do you have a water source like a pond or lake that can provide them a safe environment from predators?

Baby rabbits also need to be kept clean, warm and safe and as they grow will need a roomy house/ pen where they can romp and be kept safe from predators which could turn out to be your own dog or cat.

One chicken or duck can be quite lonely since they are flock animals, so are you prepared to maintain more than one? Do you know that chickens and ducks live ten to fifteen years and rabbits eight to twelve years? What are your plans for your child's duckling, chick or rabbit if you are not truly committed? And what if you make a mistake and keep a boy and girl rabbit together – it is possible for some breeds of rabbits to breed as early as 8-12 week of age meaning even more pets in need of new homes.

While rabbits make wonderful house pets, they cannot be left unattended as they tend to chew on everything from furniture to electric cords, with possible devastating effects. But leaving a rabbit in a small cage all the time is inherently cruel as they need to exercise and run and have fun just like we might like to. But, you can litter train a rabbit so if you are committed to having a rabbit as a house pet they can truly be wonderful additions to your family. We encourage you to spend a bit of time learning about rabbit care BEFORE you get a rabbit and the Alabama Rabbit Rescue website is a great place to start: <https://www.alabamahrs.org/learn>

We think a much better idea to celebrate Easter is to purchase a stuffed toy duck, chicken or rabbit for your child since a stuffed toy can be set aside when the child tires of it with no repercussions. After all, if you are not fully prepared for what these babies need and they die in a few days, then isn't that a sad Easter memory for your child? Easter is about life, so let's celebrate that by not putting baby animals at risk as a living child's 'toy.'