

Raising Awareness of School Chick Hatching Projects – The Hidden Damage

Freshfields Animal Rescue know that it is extremely important to educate young children on life cycles and animal welfare. We want to be able to support this in a way that ensures no animal suffers unnecessarily or is used as a disposable resource. Many schools choose chick hatching projects, but there is a lot of evidence to support that these projects are unethical and have a negative impact on the welfare of chicks. We have therefore launched an initiative to highlight these issues, by providing alternative solutions to help connect young people to animals and wildlife. This information pack has been prepared and issued to all schools in our borough. We hope you find it useful and welcome any feedback!

Chick hatching projects are used as a way to educate children on life cycles by accessing a hatching kit. This involves the school class being responsible for incubating the eggs and then caring for the chicks once they have hatched. Reviews of the chick hatching service state that “it enables students to be part of an incredible experience as they are part of the hatching process.”

Many may believe that this assists in educating children, not only on the life cycle, but also on animal care and welfare. However, in this pack, we have included details and evidence as to why we think chick hatching projects need to stop, as well as providing alternatives to these projects so that your students are still able to learn about wildlife and animals, but in a more humane and ethical way.

Thank you for reading about this important issue.

Freshfields Animal Rescue Team



THE PROBLEM WITH SCHOOL CHICK HATCHING PROJECTS



Improper Care

Caring for chicks requires knowledge and experience. If the chicks are unwell, this may not be noticed, so they will not receive the necessary treatment. Improper handling of chicks can also cause injuries.



40 Million

The egg industry as a whole is responsible for up to 40 million male chicks being legally killed each year in the UK. Chick hatching projects contribute to this total, as they are increasing the number of unwanted cockerels that cannot find suitable homes.



Unable to meet their needs

It is not uncommon for chicks to become sick or deformed when being cared for in school classrooms, due to their needs not being fully met. Organs can stick to the shell if the eggs are not being turned/rotated often, bearing in mind that a hen will turn her egg at least 30 times daily to ensure that the correct temperature and moisture are maintained.

We receive a large amount of calls and messages annually asking for us to rehome unwanted cockerels.

Unfortunately, we do not have the space to facilitate the high demand.

Over the years, we have sadly seen an increase in cockerels being abandoned and have even had them thrown over our fence in boxes. This is not fair and action needs to be taken to reduce the number of cockerels urgently needing homes.

Rescue centres are becoming overwhelmed with the large amount of cockerels needing homes, which is why we want to help raise awareness of the ethical impact that these school projects have.





WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Take action by sharing this with your colleagues, family and friends. Whether you have hatched chicks at school or not, why not try an alternative provided in the following pages?

Life cycle, animal care and welfare education is extremely important for young children. However, there are a variety of different ways to do this that will help educate children about wildlife and animal wellbeing. The following pages include some alternative options that focus on connecting young people to nature. We feel this is extremely valuable in education and by using these alternatives, you will be a part of stopping the chick hatching projects.

Sign the petition - [Petition · Protect chicks from egg-hatching projects in schools · Change.org](#)

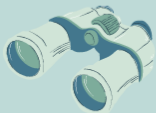
Bird Watching

"They will be finding out and exploring what is already welcoming birds to the setting and feel proud as they achieve what they set out to do by counting and identifying some familiar birds."

Benefits in the classroom



Short outdoor activities can increase engagement, which is why bird watching is a great alternative to chick hatching, as it gets the children outdoors and interacting with the natural environment.



Bird watching offers a fun and educational activity for children to get involved in, while providing a space for them to explore the wildlife around them.



Through creating bird friendly gardens and getting children involved in birdwatching surveys, they will be able to learn how life cycles work, while also understanding how they can help make a positive impact on the environment.

Bird Watching Resources

It is so easy to start bird watching, you will be surprised at how many birds you see outdoors when you are specifically looking for them.








Choose any location - ideally with a few open spaces or trees and spend 30 minutes looking out for birds. To help you identify birds find attached a copy of the Freshfields Animal Rescue Bird Watching Checklist, which provides an easy resource for all ages to record what birds have been seen.


Bird	How many did you spot? Tally your amount below.	Make a note of where you spotted this bird.
Magpie		
Robin		
Woodpigeon		
Blackbird		
Starling		
Blue tit		
House Sparrow		



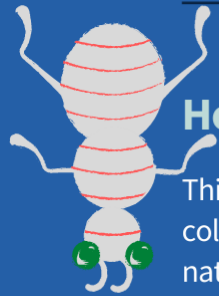


BIRD SPOTTING CHECKLIST

Bird	How many did you spot? Tally your amount below.	Make a note of where you spotted this bird.
Magpie 		
Robin 		
Woodpigeon 		
Blackbird 		
Starling 		
Blue tit 		
House Sparrow 		



Build a bug hotel



How can a bug hotel be educational?

This project would enable students to use their imagination when collecting materials. Many bug hotels are usually made from reclaimed or natural materials, which reduces any costs for the school when developing this project. Once your students have built their bug hotels, you can expect to see a variety of invertebrates, such as woodlice, earwigs, ladybirds and bees.


By participating in a bug hotel project, students of varying levels can gain a variety of skills that will help in their education, such as:

- developing their ability to gather and record wildlife data
- understanding the classifications of different species
- learning about the environment and the result of habitat destruction
- developing their creativity skills by designing and building the bug hotels
- observing invertebrate behaviour and understanding what individual species' characteristics are and why

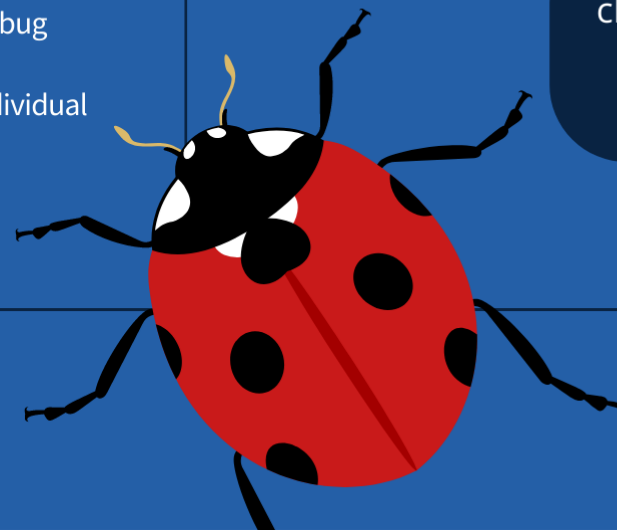
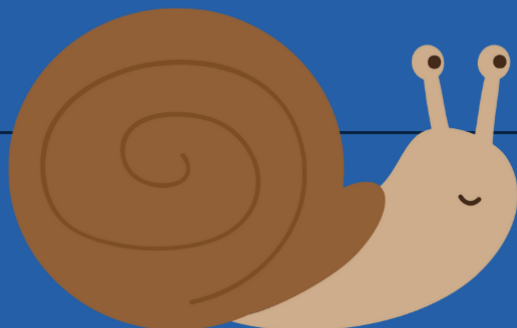
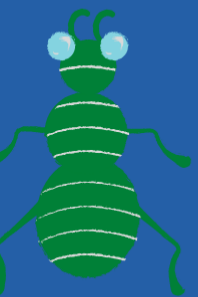
What will you need?

Insects' natural habitats include small nooks and crannies that they can shelter in. A bug hotel is usually made up of a variety of wood, bark, leaves and rocks. This creates a home for insects to nest or escape from predators. To make a good bug hotel, lots of small spaces are required, made up from different materials.

We have included a bug hotel information sheet to provide you with more information on how to create these mini habitats.



Creating a bug hotel provides children with the opportunity to get creating and explore the natural world around them.



Building a Bug Hotel

1

Lots of invertebrates like damp and cool condition, so it is best to place your bug hotel in a semi shaded area. If you have hedges, trees or shrubs placing the structure next to these will help all of the small creatures find it. It is important that the bug hotel is on an even surface!

2

The more recycled materials you can use the better – old wooden pallets are perfect for creating a basic structure. If you are wanting a big bug hotel, an easy way to create one is to place pallets on top of each other. You may wish to secure these once on top of each other. But a bug hotel does not need to be large to attract bugs – the key to a bug hotel is to create lots of layers for bugs to hide in.

3

Now it is time to fill in all of the gaps. There are a number of different materials that can be used – here are a few ideas. Dry leaves and loose bark create a great habitat for beetles, centipedes and spiders to hide beneath. You can also add in some hay, straw and bricks to offer lots of different materials for invertebrates to burrow in. Did you know, rolling up cardboard into tubes, creates the perfect home for Lacewings?

4

Remember to include lots of holes and crevices, as these will provide spaces for many invertebrates to hibernate throughout winter.

Butterfly Gardens

Creating a butterfly garden

A small garden at your school can act as an important area for butterflies, through offering food plants and nectar. The garden does not need to be large in size for butterflies to visit, as long as there are a variety of plants available for them. If you create a butterfly garden, please ensure that the schoolchildren know that they should only observe the butterflies; they should never be caught.

Head over to this link to find out about what you can include in your butterfly garden:

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/how-you-can-help/get-involved/gardening/gardening-for-butterflies>

This is very popular with schoolchildren as they get very excited watching the daily development of the caterpillars, which eventually transform into the adult butterfly.

Why not get an ethical butterfly kit?



Kits come with newly-hatched caterpillars, a rearing box, a care guide and activity sheets that can be used alongside curriculum teaching.



The schoolchildren will be able to watch the caterpillars grow until they emerge as adult butterflies. Once the butterflies appear, the schoolchildren will be able to release them into the garden, so that they can feed on the flowers.



The butterfly garden project will help children become aware of environmental issues through experiencing the beauty of butterflies and their life cycle.



Please only purchase an ethical butterfly kit if you have a responsible member of staff, as well as a butterfly garden, to ensure that all butterflies are cared for and released successfully.

What plants will attract butterflies?

- Buddleia (The butterfly bush).
- Verbena bonariensis.
- Lavender.
- Perennial Wallflower (Bowles Mauve).
- Marjoram (Oregano).



EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

1

The British Hen Welfare Trust (BHWT) offers its own educational programme. The aim of the programme is to help children grow up and learn about respecting and caring for animals. The courses and resources offered are free and linked to the curriculum, with lesson plans available for a variety of sessions. The lesson plans focus on a range of topics, such as animal welfare, farming and food.

2

Free workshops discussing animal welfare, science-related topics and egg production can be booked, while hen care sessions are also provided for any schools that currently own hens. Here is a link to the BHWT Educational Programme: [Educational workshops | British Hen Welfare Trust \(bhwt.org.uk\)](#).

3

Compassion in Education aims to aid the provision of alternatives to chick hatching via video alternatives. These videos include equipment that is set up in bird nest boxes, enabling school students to watch wild birds in their nests. This can include watching the birds build their nests, lay their eggs and raise their young. To find out how you can gain access to these videos, please visit Compassion in Education's Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/CompassioninEducation/>



freshfields

animal rescue



Thank You!

We believe that the alternatives in this pack will provide your students with an enriching project that is ethical. Animals need our help, and by choosing an alternative, you will be saving chicks, while also making a difference to our native species.

We would like to hear from you if you do make the changeover or use one of the alternative projects for the first time. If you let us know how it has worked out and send us some photos, we will share them on our Facebook page and give your school a shout out as a thank you for supporting us with this cause.

Any questions about chick hatching?
Freshfields are happy to help!



0151 931 1604



georgia@freshfields.org.uk

freshfields

animal rescue