



24 April 2012

Via facsimile to 254.697.2393

Janet Crouch, owner  
Ideal Poultry Breeding Farms, Inc.  
215 West Main  
Cameron, TX 76520 U.S.A.

Ms. Crouch:

I am a veterinarian and Emeritus Professor of Veterinary Medicine at the University of California. I am writing out of concern for your shipment of chicks through the US Postal Service and an apparent lack of screening of recipients.

Shipping young chicks through the US Postal Service, which includes air transport, is unquestionably inhumane because it compromises their welfare.<sup>1,4</sup> As surely you are aware, newly and recently hatched chicks cannot properly regulate their body temperature and are extremely susceptible to changes in ambient temperature. Connecting flights, unexpected delays and extremes of temperatures further complicate the situation and substantially increase the amount of time the chicks would be exposed to adverse conditions as well as be without food or water. Not only are the animals stressed by this form of transportation and the variability of transit times, they can become distressed to the point of injury or death.<sup>4,5</sup> There may even be significant public health implications because the stress can cause the chicks to shed the *Salmonella* bacterium.<sup>2,3</sup>

Entities such as FedEx and UPS, which could provide overnight service, will not ship chicks. In at least the case of UPS, their prohibition appears to be related to humane concerns. This should be of concern to you.

Another issue of great concern is that you state that "...there may be male chicks placed in the box for warmth or comfort during shipping." (<http://www.idealpoultry.com/policy.asp>; last accessed 24 Apr 2012) Most people would not want these chicks. Even if these chicks survive the trip, it is likely that they will either die soon after or be killed or discarded in some inhumane manner. To use these individuals as some sort of disposable "packing material" is unconscionable.

Although I appreciate that you provide generally good information on the care of chicks (chickens) on your Web site, it has been my experience that most people do not know how to care for these animals and are simply not capable. Providing information which may or may not be utilized or understood in no way insures that the chicks will have a safe and humane life once they leave your facility. Children in particular have little idea of what is proper or what is humane. More importantly, once the novelty of having a chick, particularly when the individual is no longer "cute," wears off, the

individual may either be neglected or discarded. Regardless of your good intentions and commitment to chickens, which appear to be sincere, you simply have no control over this. All this is not just conjecture on my part. I work with humane groups and animal shelters who are on the receiving end of these unwanted chickens. If another home cannot be found for the chickens, death is the "solution."

Whereas I realize you are in the business of selling chicks, the situation is inherently problematic and more than just potentially injurious to the birds. At the very least, some sort of screening process should be in place where the suitability of the future home of the individuals is evaluated. A method of shipping that does not leave delivery to the vagaries of the US Postal Service should be instituted. And, no living animal should be used as mere "packing material."



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