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As a veterinarian and expert on animal welfare issues, I offer my professional opinion on so-called chick-hatching projects. Although I understand and agree with the desire to teach children about the wonders of life, allowing chicken eggs to be incubated and hatched in a school setting is not a humane way to do this.

One of the major problems is what to do with all the chicks who are hatched. Finding suitable homes for them is not practical nor can it be assured that the re-homed chicks will be looked after properly for their lifetime. Further, although chicks are 'cute and cuddly' and attractive to children who might take them home, adult chickens are not as compelling to most people. Will the people involved continue to provide a suitable home for them? Given that chickens can, under ideal circumstances, live to be well over ten years, the responsibility is not trivial.

Chickens are highly social animals and their welfare and well-being depend on compatible social groups, making solitary adoptions inhumane. Further, in schools, they will be born without a mother, their instinctual principal. They will imprint quickly on other living beings in their vicinity. Whether these issues may lead to welfare or well-being problems later when the chicks are in a new location is unknown, but avoidable by not hatching the chicks in the first place.

It is my understanding that some schools send the new chickens to farms. Most commercial farms, however, would have no use for a few new individuals and would not want the risk of 'contaminating' an established flock. Even if a farm would take the chicks, the life of the chicks would be short as they would be killed within a year in most situations. It should be obvious that it is morally questionable to purposefully 'create' these chickens in schools and then allow them to be killed gratuitously.

Another issue is medical care for chicks who may have congenital problems or develop problems soon after hatching. It is highly unlikely that adequate veterinary care, which can be a substantial financial burden, will be part of the programs. It is also questionable whether the teachers involved will know enough about avian disease to know when to seek veterinary help.

There are many other ways to teach biology, ways that do not purposefully produce new lives only to destroy them. Children may learn something about biology through chick-hatching projects, but they will also learn a lesson in inhumanity. They will learn that other animals are simply 'tools' for people to use as they please, regardless of the consequences for the animals. This is the antithesis of providing a humane education, which should be an important component of any educational program.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nedim C. Buyukmihci'.

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