

We started the first batch of 300 chicks this week.

They are just one day old in these photos.

Most of the chicks are the popular White Cornish Rock type.

The reddish chicks are a heritage breed called Red Ranger.



The Whites grow faster and develop meatier breasts.

The Reds are more physically active and take longer to reach harvest size.

The Reds have a higher percentage of red meat, which is tastier.

When raised in confinement the Whites reach harvest weight in 5 weeks.

In confinement, on concentrated feed, they develop many health problems.

Problems including organ failures and crippling leg deformities.

It takes ten weeks or more for them to reach harvest weight on our farm.

In the photos, the chicks are eating organic starter feed.

I will switch them to primarily wheat when they are several weeks old.

That is about the same time as they will start enjoying the great outdoors.

Wheat is not normally fed to chickens.

It is however, good poultry food, especially when the birds have access to bugs, grass and dirt.

On wheat, the chickens grow at a slower, healthy rate and they live well.

The Red Rangers require about 12 weeks to harvest.

Even then, they are lighter than the Whites.

Our customers order about 20% Reds, 80% Whites.

Because they are more active, the Reds are better natural grazers than the Whites.
We raise the Whites and Reds together.
We do so because the more aggressive Reds teach the Whites to range for food.



Once the chicks start grazing, our biggest challenge is protecting them from predators. Their pastures are surrounded with electrified mesh fence to keep ground predators away. Suspended nets and strings provide fair protection from large raptors, including eagles. Smaller raptors, such as kestrels seldom bother them once they are past the chick stage. When a raptor approaches, the first bird to notice it gives a quiet squawk. Instantly, all the other birds dive for cover, freeze in place, or stand rigid along a fence or other obstruction. At night, they must be carefully confined. We do not lose many.
Tom