

Splayed Legs in Budgie Chicks

Splayed legs in a chick is where the chicks leg or legs are turned out from the body (a bit like an aeroplane wing) as you see on the chicks left leg below:



Causes of splayed legs can range from things like calcium deficiency, the hen sitting too tight on the chicks and a slippery nest box floor.

To help prevent splayed legs in chicks you must plan ahead.

Give the birds extra calcium during the breeding season, Calcivet or similar in the drinking water during laying and while the chicks are growing will help hen lay strong eggs and give strong chicks (always follow the instructions on the bottle as Calcivet can be overdosed).

Always leave a couple of unhatched eggs in the nest box as the newly hatched chicks can use them to support themselves. If all the eggs do hatch then place either a false egg, glass marble, white pebble or even a "Cool Mint" that is just a bit larger than the eggs in with the chicks, this will prevent the hen sitting too tight on the chicks.

A slippery nest box floor, in my opinion, is one of the worst culprits for splayed legs.

As many of you will know the nest box concave is sometimes roughed up by the manufacturer to prevent slipping but the rest of the floor is shiny and slippery and not nearly rough enough for the little chicks feet to grip, causing their legs to slide apart which results in the chicks not being able to stand properly and developing splayed legs.

Use plenty of wood shavings (not saw dust) in the nest box and if possible roughen up the nest box floor. You could also use any other similar nest box material, but sawdust is the most common used by breeders.

Some hens will throw all of the sawdust out of the box in the period between pairing up, laying and incubating. Just keep putting more in the nest box. She will usually stop throwing it out after the chick hatch.

After all this, if a chick still develops splayed legs you can repair them if it's detected early enough by any one of the following methods.

There are several creative ways to treat splayed legs:

1. Some people use a pipe cleaner because it's easier than trying to tie a fiddly knot. With a pipe cleaner, you can just bend it around the chicks legs and also they have a soft woollen covering.



2. Others use vet tape (tape or bandages that stick to themselves) to wrap around the legs and bring them closer together.
3. Others use cosmetic make-up foam pads OR pedicure foam toe separators, with holes cut out for the legs at the desired angle. This solution can provide a soft and safe alternative to correcting the bird's legs.



4. Alternatively, if the birds are to be club rung, put 2 rings on, one on each leg, and tie them together with a twist tie. This works very successfully, but watch that the end of the twist tie does not pierce the skin.

To repair splayed legs, it's best if the chick is on its back and there are two people as it makes it easier to bind the legs together.

The “splint” will need to be left on for anything from a few days or up to three weeks depending on severity and the age of the chick.

Sometimes the hen will reject the chick or try to pull the splint off. If this happens then you may have to hand rear the chick.

If splayed legs are not treated early enough then the chick will remain crippled for the rest of its life. As the chick grows older and develops, it's bones calcify, meaning that their bones will have hardened and are no longer soft and pliable and therefore cannot be corrected; so any correction must be done before the chick is two weeks old otherwise it might be too late for the chick.

Although chicks survive and do learn to adapt (with our help) with one splayed leg, having two splayed legs is different because the chick cannot stand at all so all its weight is on it's vital organs and it will probably die.

The link below is another article on splayed legs;

<http://www.cutelittlebirdiesaviary.com/splayed-leg-prevention-and-treatment.html>