

Easter chicks for rent at Eastern Market

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Peep this: A local farm is renting chicks for Easter out of its stall at Eastern Market and Sarah Wilson, a Detroit mom, is thinking she might do it.

"It's a good learning opportunity," she said, looking at her daughters Ruth and Frieda, bouncing around in anticipation. "And you don't have to deal with the long-term responsibility. It's a brilliant idea."

The plan was hatched three years ago by Johnny Gyergov of J&M Farm in Allenton, in St. Clair County, after reading about an East Coast farmer who was doing something similar. For \$50, he'll send home two chicks with their own pen, bedding and feed for two weeks. At the end of the rental, each 14-day farmer brings back the chicks and gets a dozen eggs. The chicks replace older hens in the egg production line, where the birds live in coops,

but are free to go as they please within a fenced area.

He has 50 pairs of fuzzed learning material ready to go.

"The kids get to be little chicken farmers for two weeks," he said from his Saturday stall in Shed 2, close to Russell Street. "It's just that time of year that we always replace our chickens. We just offer this as another fun thing to do with kids and families."

And it's a way of keeping chicks out of animal shelters, where the Humane Society of the United States says they often end up after being given as Easter gifts.

Ruth and Frieda, who also have a dog, can't wait.

"We'll take care of it," said

Ruth, whose classroom at Brookside Lower School at Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills once had a guinea pig. "Play with it, get it food, give it water and clean its cage."

Sarah Wilson said they've never done chicks before but the experience will probably be worth it. If they decide to rent, they'll come back to the farm's stall the Saturday before Easter to pick up the chicks, and return them to the same spot.

"It will be the best day of my life," Frieda said about getting a chick.

J&M Farm is better known for pork production, but Gyergov said corn and fuel prices have dwindled his hog heads from several hundred to about

50. Rent-a-chick allows J&M Farm to make up some of that loss, he said. "It's 50 cents here, 50 cents there," he said.

They have between 600 and 700 chickens, 100 of which are

egg-laying, and the rest for meat.

Last year, he said, they rented 20 pairs, and got 19 back.

Though Sarah Wilson hasn't decided, her daughters

are already celebrating. "We get to have a chicken," said Ruth, smiling ear-to-ear.

For information on renting a pair of chicks, call 810-798-3743.

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