

Duck Week

# A Beginner's Guide To Raising Ducks

Photo by @axeandroothomestead

# Duck Week Hosts

Angela of @Axeandroothomestead  
Annette of @Azurefarms  
Amber of @dolledupandmuddy  
Lisa of @fresheggdaily  
Lana of @lanastenner  
Jenny of @tallwoodcountryhouse  
Amanda of @ajwildwayfarm  
Tara of @shesrootedhome



Photo by @fresheggdaily

# Tips for brooding ducks.



Photo by @Janastenner

- 01 Keep chicks and ducklings separate.
- 02 Ducklings grow faster than chicks.
- 03 Ducklings need less heat.
- 04 Ducklings make a mess. I recommend keeping them in a bathtub for easy clean up.
- 05 Ducklings can drown! Never leave them unsupervised in the tub or sink filled with water.
- 06 Ducklings need to keep there nostrils moist. Add water dishes they can submerge there bills in without drowning.
- 07 Ducklings require more niacin for proper bone development.
- 08 You can feed ducklings regular chick starter feed, but you'll need to add Brewer's Yeast .
- 09 Ducklings should be fed un-medicated feed.
- 10 Ducklings love treats such as fresh herbs and leafy greens.
- 11 By 7-9 weeks, ducklings should be able to move outdoors.
- 13 Straw makes a nice choice for bedding.
- 14 Ducks need a predator-proof coop and/or run for the night
- 15 Ducks integrate well but always supervise new flock members.

@fresheggdaily

# Duck eggs are actually more nutritious than chicken eggs.

The white portion of a duck egg contains 9 grams of protein; there are 6 grams in a chicken egg white. A duck egg yolk is larger in proportion to the egg white when compared to a chicken egg. This contains a higher, more healthy fat content plus more Omega-3s and vitamin D.

Many people with egg allergies can safely consume duck eggs.



@axeandroothomestead

Ducks tend to lay more frequently than chickens. They do not typically stop laying in winter, but instead produce year round.

Duck eggs also have a thicker shell than chicken eggs giving them a slightly longer shelf life.

They are also extremely cold hardy and tolerant due to their body fat, down and waterproof feathers.





Soiled duck bedding or manure can be applied to the garden right away. Chicken manure should be well composted before application due to pathogens.

Male  
ducks  
(drakes)  
have no  
spurs!





The webbed feet of a duck do not tear away at the earth or in garden beds. While they do use their bills to look for insects, they do not kill grass or plant bedding.

And most duck breeds can not fly; only glide several feet. That means no roosting and no high nest boxes. Eggs are laid in large nests on the ground.



# Duck Feed Recipe

50lb bag cracked corn  
40lb bag black oil sunflower seeds  
20lbs rolled oats  
2.5lbs meal worms

Plus: sprinkling of Garlic Brewers Yeast for niacin on every meal.  
Cayenne pepper powder once per week as a dewormer, oyster shells for a calcium boost and peas or greens for treats.



This core recipe above comes out to 112.5 lbs of feed totaling .59 cents per pound. Store-bought layer feed is much cheaper at only .27 cents per pound but it's heavy in soy which I don't care for. It's worth noting that my ducks free range sunup to sundown. This is not their sole, complete diet. This is a formula I created as a supplemental feed.

# H E R B S



Herbs are a great, holistic way to keep your flock healthy as many antibacterial properties, are immunity boosters, and repel pests. Here are a few I grow each year in my garden with extra plants for the flock in mind: Anise Hyssop, Echinacea, Nasturtium, Basil, Oregano, Thyme, Parsley, Rose, Calendula, Lemon Balm Sage and Sunflower.

































An emergency kit is an absolute MUST on a farm or homestead for both people and animals. Sometimes the vet isn't available, within reach, open or affordable. Here's what's in mine.

FOR POULTRY: Nutridrench, VetRx, Vetericyn Ophthalmic Gel, Vetericyn Wound Spray, 21 gauge syringes for water belly, Blue Kite spray or Wound Coat.

GENERAL: Cotton gauze roll, Vet Wrap, Betadine, Alcohol, Hydrogen Peroxide, Neosporine, Gloves, Saline Solution, Chlorhexidine solution and Mineral oil

# DUCK BREED

## COMPARISON

BREED	DISPOSITION	WEIGHT CLASS	PURPOSE	EGG COLOR	AVERAGE EGGS/YEAR
PEKIN	MODERATE	HEAVY			200
CRESTED PEKIN	NERVOUS	LIGHT			150
BUFF	NERVOUS	MIDDLE			150-220
CAYUGA	NERVOUS	HEAVY			100-150
SWEDISH	CALM	MEDIUM			100-150
RUNNER	NERVOUS	LIGHT			200+
ANCONA	CALM	MIDDLE			210-230
MAGPIE	NERVOUS	LIGHT			220-290
KHAKI CAMPBELL	NERVOUS	LIGHT			250-340
WELSH HARLEQUIN	CALM	MIDDLE			240-330
MUSCovy	CALM	HEAVY			130
ROJEN	MODERATE	HEAVY			30-125
SILVER APPLEARD	CALM	MIDDLE			200-270
SAXONY	CALM	MIDDLE			190-240
HOCKBILL	MODERATE	LIGHT			100-225

Note: blue egg laying is determined by genetics. White eggshell is a recessive trait; blue egg shells are dictated by a dominant gene. If the bird carries the dominant gene, it will lay blue eggs.  
 Chart Sources: The Livestock Conservancy (<https://livestockconservancy.org/images/uploads/docs/DuckChart2016.pdf>), Metzger Farms (<https://www.metzgerfarms.com/DuckBreedComparisonNewcfm>)

# *DUCKLING CARE*



Baby ducks are by far one of my favorite farm babies! But there are some things you need to know before getting ducklings !







## They Grow VERY VERY VERY FAST

Unlike chickens baby ducks grow super fast and are full grown looking and feathered within 6-8 weeks. They basically double in size per week. Be sure you have accommodations ready before getting them. They'll only be precious ducklings for about 2 weeks

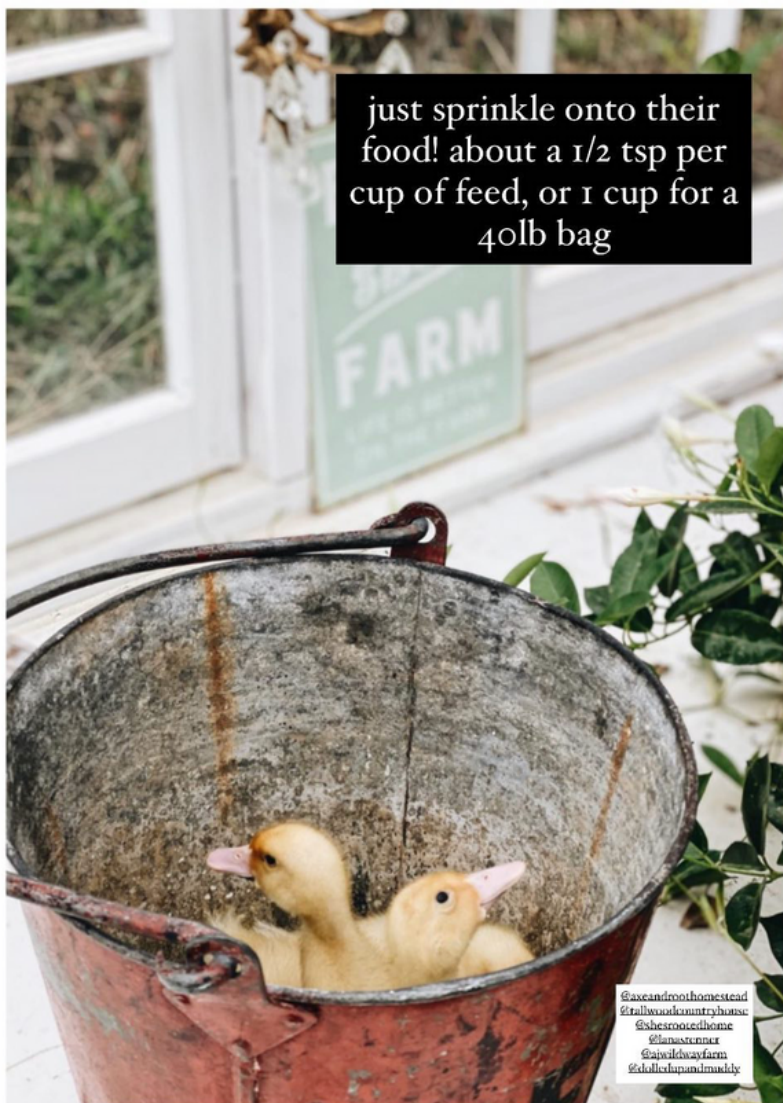


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They are **VERY VERY VERY MESSY!**

Ducklings can take clean water and make it dirty within 5 minutes. If you get ducklings you'll need to clean out their brooder probably every other day and fill their water twice daily.

They must be in a clean environment and it's hard to keep it clean. Just be aware!



just sprinkle onto their food! about a 1/2 tsp per cup of feed, or 1 cup for a 40lb bag

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@ralliwatcountryhouse  
@shesrootedhome  
@lanascanner  
@ajwildwayfarm  
@dallclupandmuddy

## They need Niacin in their diet

Niacin is VITAL to their leg development! If you give them chicken starter you must add brewers yeast ( a great source of Niacin) The Brewers yeast won't hurt chickens if you have them and it will be great for your ducklings.



## They CANNOT swim UNNATENDED until 4 weeks of age.

Their feathers don't have waterproofing oil until about 4 weeks of age. So they must be supervised when swimming. They could drown or get super cold because their feathers are not waterproof.

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*THEY WILL  
STEAL YOUR  
HEART*



# HOW TO HOUSE A MIXED FLOCK

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## **SPACE:**

For the most part all of our birds have gotten along quite nicely and enjoy prancing about doing their own thing. Probably the most important factor of all is to ensure they all have enough space. When they are in cramped quarters it tends to get a bit crazy. We allow ours to free range so for the most part they all get along and tolerate each other in the coop and run until I let them out daily. Free-ranging is vital to our feathered friends health so I would encourage you to allow your mixed flock to do that.

We currently have ducks, chickens, and turkeys together. I would not recommend having a large amount of ducks as they tend to be very messy and sloppy which makes the coop and run a mess. ( Trust me I am experiencing this) I would say 4 ducks and about 10 + chickens is a good mix.

## **BLACKHEAD DISEASE**

Turkeys are prone to a disease called blackhead disease. This is a parasite that chickens can carry and if a turkey eats something the chickens have pooped on they can get that disease if the duck is carrying it. It can be fatal as it wrecks havoc on the turkeys intestines. My birds free range a lot so the time they are in close quarters is lessened which helps prevent some of their exposure to this issue. Many people keep turkeys and chicks together with no issue. I monitor and also regularly deworm everyone with pumpkin seeds, garlic, turmeric, and other natural things you can use mix in with their food. This helps keep things at bay. Always monitor your flock and don't introduce new birds that could potentially be infected

## **COOP/RUN**

Our actual coop is not very large but can house plenty of hens if needed. However, the turkeys are quite large and it's not made for that. Turkeys do tend to love being outdoors more so I put large branches out in the run and the turkeys love those! Some of the hens also choose to sleep outside and since they are in the run which is protected I do not mind at all!

Ducks tend to always sleep on the floor so I try to ensure there are areas with pine shavings so they can nestle together. Ensure you provide safe area for everyone at night and they will be happy!





# HOW TO FEED A MIXED FLOCK

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## **FEED:**

A mixed flock can have many different dietary needs, but thankfully most of the birds usually eat similar things so it hopefully is not too complex.

An 18% protein feed should be about what all birds need to be healthy. The easiest way to feed everyone is this:

**FEED A NON-MEDICATED CHICKEN FEED TO EVERYONE AND ADD A FEW EXTRA SUPPLEMENTS TO IT AND THEY'LL BE OK.**

**FEEDERS:** With a large flock it's probably a good idea to have multiple feeders and waterers. This will ensure everyone has a place to eat and there is less squabbling. Its especially a good idea if you have little ones or younger flock that need a different feed.

## **WATER:**

If you have ducks be sure to have a large source of water that they cannot swimming but they can drink out of. They need to be able to dip their beaks in water fully to properly drink and clean their airways. Adding some apple cider vinegar to the water also helps keep everyone healthy.

**NIACIN-** Ducks need niacin for their leg development and health. Chicken feed does not include it so be sure to add some brewers yeast to your feed if you've got ducks. It won't hurt your chickens and it will ensure your ducks are getting enough of what they need.

If you've got baby chicks who need a different concentration of protein try to keep a feeder near with the correct feed for them and at mealtimes place it near them. They usually figure out that I'll feed them special food and they come running.

**TREATS-** Everyone loves treats! From a young age I will give treats such as Grubbies and get everyone used to knowing I'm the treat lady. This then makes it easier when trying to lock everyone up at night. They all come running!



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OTHER THOUGHTS

Things to note when keeping a mixed flock

**Male to Female ratio:** If there are too many boys and not enough girls it could be a problem. It's recommended to have 1 rooster per 6-7 hens. Same goes for ducks etc. We currently have way too many male ducks and we need to re-arrange a bit which will not be easy. Trying to move some to a different area soon. IF there's not enough females to males there will be issues with over breeding etc. And also more squabbling.

**BULLYING:** Be on the lookout for bullying. Ensure everyone is eating and getting all they need for proper nutrition. Especially if they are not free-ranging. If you notice a problem with bullying ensure nobody is getting hurt and everyone is still getting enough food etc.

**Species-** Don't mix too many species unless you have a ton of space.

**Smaller Birds-** It's preferable to not keep smaller birds like bantams or silkies in with other large breeds. They'll get picked on or worse. I separated my silkies out and put them in a totally different area.

# Duck Facts

- 01 Ducks are great contributors in the garden. They eat slugs and other pests! Their manure is a fertilizer.
- 02 Ducks can get bumblefoot. Bumblefoot is essentially a staff infection that appears with a black scab on the bottom of the webbing of the foot.
- 03 Ducks can develop angel wing. Angel wing happens when birds are given too much protein when they are young. For the first 6 weeks feed them about 20 % protein and after that quickly integrate a lower percent feed, like a 16%.
- 04 Water belly is when a duck looks like it's overweight, their belly is dragging on the floor, but really it's a pocket of fluid and the abdominal cavity is filling. A belly dragging on the ground is NOT a overweight duck, it's a bad thing.
- 05 Ducks bond closely with each other and don't care much about any pecking order.



Photo by @tallwoodcountryhouse

- 06 Ducks do equally well in warm and cold climates.
- 07 They breathe a lot of moisture, lots of ventilation is key. Ventilation prevents bill frostbite.
- 08 Ducks swim in winter! Their feet help control body temperature.
- 09 Ducks generally lay their eggs under the pre-dawn cover of darkness, then cover them up with straw.
- 10 Duck eggs have more fat and cholesterol in them than chicken eggs, but are also more nutrient and a different protein.



# Coop Cleaner

One of the top questions I get is "What cleaners do you use for your coop?" I sense of a little bit of a shock when I tell people I make it. This recipe costs pennies to the dollar and I promise you will love using it. The cleaner is not only perfect for the coop but can be used in the house, too!

NOTE: Do not use vinegar based cleaners on metal surfaces. It will tarnish and react to the metal.

*“As you get comfortable with the process, it’s fun to start playing with different citrus and herbs to infuse the vinegar.”*

## **What you will need:**

### **Part 1**

White distilled vinegar

Orange peels (I save orange peels in a container tucked in the freezer till I have enough)

Rosemary or lavender (optional)

Mason jar or any glass jar with lid

### **Part 2:**

Jar of infused vinegar

Food strainer

Spray bottle

Bowl

## **Directions:**

- 1.** Pack the glass jar with orange peels and rosemary till it is about 2-3 inches from the brim. Wide mouth jars are easier to pack but if you have trouble, a wooden spoon can help you gently press the peels into the jar.
- 2.** Fill the jar with vinegar until the peels are all the way submerged. Place the lid on the jar and put in the refrigerator for 6-8 weeks. The wait can be hard but so worth it!





## Part 2:

1. After at least 6 weeks, it's time to remove and discard the remnants. Place food stainer over a bowl and strain the liquid out. Go ahead and put the infused vinegar back in the empty jar. Infused vinegar jar Can be stored under the sink or in your pantry.

2. Add 1 part infused vinegar and 1 part water to a spray bottle, then have fun cleaning the coop!





# Keeping Ducks in Cold Climates

Information and tips for keeping ducks in cooler  
and winter months.



Ducks are hardy. They have their own unique ways of protecting themselves in cold weather. They have layers of waterproof feathers that repel water and keep their cozy downy feathers dry. They have a dense layer of fat that keeps their body temperature elevated. They don't have combs and wattles so are therefore less prone to frostbite. And one of the most interesting things about ducks- their feet are not equipped with insulation or fat... but how do they swim in icy water and walk on snow without freezing?

They have a counter-current exchange system from their body to their extremities. In ducks, their veins and arteries returning from their feet run very close to each other. As cold blood returns to the body from the foot, it runs close to the artery and picks up heat. By the time the artery blood reaches the foot it is cooled and doesn't lose too much heat while the foot is in cold water. There is never a reduced flow of blood to the foot and this way, they're able to maintain their core temperature ultimately lowering the risk of frostbite.



@ajwildwayfarm

Ducks are fairly cold hardy, but they certainly need a few things to keep them healthy, safe, and stress-free during cold winter months. Providing a shelter out of the rain, sleet, ice, snow and wind is important. Their shelter should be a draft-free place where they can stay dry and have adequate material to bed down in and fluff their feathers over their feet. I use a combination of flaked shavings, hay, and sometimes straw.

Ventilation and insulation are also important. You want their shelter free of drafts and insulated in a way that it will retain any heat their bodies generate.

Ventilation is also an important consideration. Duck respiration will create condensation inside of their shelter. Wet can cause respiratory illnesses and can also lead to frostbite. If you have significant condensation, you need more ventilation. I use straw, paper shopping bags, and unusable wool to insulate, and my coop has vents in the eaves.



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Water and ducks go hand-in-hand. If you live somewhere where temperatures will be below freezing, please consider the water commitment of ducks before purchasing. I'm lucky in that I have a pond and running water they have 24/7 access to. They will still swim and bathe if they have access to water when it's below freezing. They still need water daily deep enough to clear their nasal passages and to swallow their feed properly. Electric water heaters are an option as well as insulating buckets and troughs, and employing tricks like floating water bottles on the surface to keep ice from forming.

I like to mix my own duck feed in addition to formulated crumbles, and mix as follows:

5-gallon pale at a time

1/2 16% crumble

2 parts alfalfa pellets

1 part corn

1 part oats

1 part black oil sunflower seeds

1 part field peas

1 part wheat

Sprinkle kelp and brewer's yeast on top

**MIX!**





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Additional cold weather thoughts... I make sure they have hay or straw to stand on while eating and on their paths to provide a barrier between their feet and the snow. Even with their efficient counter-current exchange system, their feet can freeze. They will appreciate a place to swim in winter, but daily pool filling isn't necessary. A deep bucket that they can fully dip their head into is sufficient, and a black bucket on a sunny day will keep from freezing longer. Available water for drinking is always necessary.

They will appreciate any greens, vegetables and fruit in winter too!

You'll notice they look extra fluffy/puffy on cold days and may intermittently tuck one foot up into their feathers- totally normal!

# Duck Week Resources

Axe and Root Homestead

Bumblefoot

<https://axeandroothomestead.thinkific.com/courses/fixing-bumblefoot-in-60-seconds-demonstration>

Axe and Root Homestead

Duck Breed Comparison Chart

<https://www.axeandroothomestead.com/store/p47/DuckBreedComparisonChart.html>

Azure Farm

Duckling Care 101

<https://www.azurefarmlife.com/farm-blog/2019/4/10/duckling-care-101>

Azure Farm

Keeping A Mixed Flock

<https://www.azurefarmlife.com/farm-blog/mixed%20flock>

Dolled Up and Muddy

Coop Cleaner

<https://www.dolledupandmuddy.com/post/coop-cleaner>

Fresh Eggs

Daily Basic Duckling Care

<https://www.fresheggdaily.blog/2012/02/basic-duckling-care-raising-healthy.html?m=1>

Fresh Eggs Daily

Adding Ducks To your Backyard Chicken Flock

<https://www.fresheggdaily.blog/2020/04/adding-ducks-to-your-backyard-chicken.html?m=1>

Fresh Eggs Daily

Homemade Lemon Thyme Herbal Coop Cleaning Spray

<https://www.fresheggdaily.blog/2015/04/lemon-thyme-herbal-brooder-cleaning.html>

# Duck Week Resources

Fresh Eggs Daily

What Color Eggs Do Ducks Lay

<https://www.fresheggdaily.blog/2019/04/what-color-eggs-do-ducks-lay.html?m=1>

Duck Eggs Daily: Raising Happy Healthy Ducks by Lisa Steele

<https://amzn.to/3nHwM8s>

Fresh Eggs Daily Brewer's Yeast with Garlic Powder

Chicken and Duck Feed Supplement

<https://amzn.to/38ZP2Wr>

Wild Way Farm

Winter Care

<https://wildwayfarm.net/winter-care>