



Starter Guide to **RAISING DUCKS**

In addition to the basic chick care information, new duck owners will find these tips helpful.

DUCKLING VS. CHICKS:

Ducklings and chicks have similar care requirements. Although ducklings and chicks can be raised together, ducklings have different feed requirements and tend to be messier, which can make a shared brooder difficult.

BROODER SPACE:

Ducklings do not handle being overheated well, so be careful to monitor their heat. They do best in a temperature of 90 degrees for the first week, with the temperature reducing by 5 degrees each week until they are fully feathered. Panting and drooping wings are signs that they are overheated.

Ducklings can make quite a mess while drinking and eating, so it is important that their brooder space be routinely cleaned with fresh bedding added. Although many people like to use cardboard boxes as brooders, they really do not work with ducks. They are just too messy! We have found that a Rubbermaid box works best, as they contain mess but are easily hosed out.

FEEDING:

You should never feed ducks without water. Water helps the duck get food down and clean beak vents. Ducklings require different starter than chicks, because they have higher niacin requirements. Feeding ducklings chick starter can lead to niacin deficiency, causing leg weakness and development issues.

See our Feeding Guideline for detailed information. Just like chicks, ducklings appreciate greens and fruits, but they must be chopped into small pieces. Do not feed grass clippings.

WATER:

Ducklings need to have access to fresh, clean water at all times. Ducklings will drink significantly more water than chicks, so their founts should be checked regularly.

The water fount should be deep enough for them to submerge their heads so they can clean out their nostrils and eyes, but shallow enough that they cannot submerge their bodies.

SWIMMING:

While ducklings love to play in the water, it is easy for them to become fatigued and chilled when they are young. Therefore they should only be allowed supervised swim time, until they are ready to move outside (and not before they are 2 weeks old). Ducklings will not produce oil to ‘waterproof’ their feathers until they are 4 weeks old.

After 4 weeks, you can add a shallow pan of water for them to bath and play in, but make sure it is shallow enough for them to stand up in. Of course, this will make the brooder space much messier.

FROM DUCKLING TO DUCKS:

Although ducks do not have as many housing requirements as chickens (no laying boxes or roosts) they do need shelter to protect them from the elements, although usually they prefer to sleep outdoors. A duck house can be as simple as a dog house with a door!

Unlike chickens, ducks do not have a natural instinct to “put themselves to bed” when the sun goes down, so if you hope to lock your ducks inside at night, plan on luring them into the coop for the first several weeks until they figure out the routine. Feeding them inside their house can be a helpful tool.

While ducks LOVE a pond to swim in, a pond is not required. Ducks must have access to water deep enough for them to submerge their face to clean.

However, a small stock tank or kiddie pool can double perfectly as a duck pool. Most importantly, you want something that can easily be drained and cleaned. All of our duck breeds are domesticated breeds that do not fly.