



DUCK CARE

Feeding and Management of Ducks

Ducklings may be floor brooded the same as chicks, but need more floor space per bird. An area 10 feet square is suitable for brooding 200 ducklings for the first 10 days. The birds need additional space to run after that period.

Ducks should be started at 90° F (32° C) for the first 7 days. The temperature may be lowered 5° (2-3° C) per week thereafter for 6-8 weeks until birds are feathered. Infrared heat lamps with hard glass bulbs that won't break if water is thrown about by the birds are satisfactory for brooding. They should be hung 24" to 30" above the litter. Any other kind of brooder with a Hoover will also do a good job, but take care to raise the Hoover high enough so that the birds won't burn their heads. Straw or shavings make good litter for brooding.

Don't use newspapers for litter because ducklings find it difficult to walk on such a smooth surface, and it may even cause them to become lame and go off their feet completely.

The birds should be fed all they will eat of a good duck starter for the first 2 weeks. If this is unavailable, chick starter may prove quite satisfactory if you ensure that it is not medicated with any drugs that could be harmful to ducklings. It is essential that plenty of drinking water be available at all times as these birds are born thirsty and stay that way.

Swimming water is unnecessary and, in the case of a large flock, may even invite disease through water pollution.

Diseases are rare in waterfowl, and ducks seldom require non-natural feed additives or medications. This makes them an ideal choice for those concerned about food additives. However, there are several conditions which do arise occasionally, and which you should watch for. First, lameness may appear. This is often due to niacin deficiency, either in the starting ration if the condition appears in very young birds, or in older birds because the pasture has become dry and brown. Also, sometimes respiratory problems occur, and the birds have symptoms similar to those found in chickens. Among the possible causes are moldy bedding material, poor ventilation, and viruses. Antibiotics will usually prove helpful.