

Producing and Marketing Waterfowl Eggs

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There are many ways to raise waterfowl.

We choose to free-range our ducks and geese. We choose to only sell eggs.

Other options include

- Selling processed ducks and geese
- Producing ducklings/goslings for sale
- Selling fertilized eggs

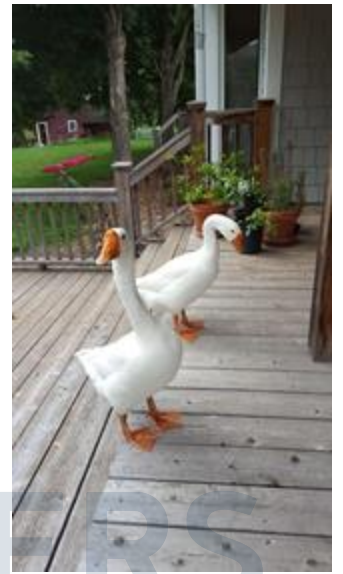
We will discuss what we choose to do.



Why waterfowl? Why ducks and geese?

Waterfowl vs Chickens

1. Health of waterfowl vs chickens
2. Price of eggs
 - a. Ducks and Geese vs Chickens
 - i. Premium price for eggs
 - ii. We currently have at least a month-long waiting list. People come to our farm to pick up their eggs and ask to be put right back on the waiting list.
 - i. Grocery stores don't sell duck or goose eggs, while they have many brands and varieties of chicken eggs
1. Cold and Heat - ducks are more tolerant of extremes than chickens
2. Use of dirty bedding
 - a. chicken manure is hot and should be aged before using. Duck droppings can be used immediately.



Why ducks and geese - continued

Geese

- Guardians since we free range our birds
- Weeders
- Egg producers



Which breeds to choose and why

1. Certain breeds lay more eggs than others
2. Top layers we have had:
 - Golden Hybrid 300 layers 200 - 290 eggs/yr
 - White Layer Hybrid 200 - 290 eggs/yr
 - Anconas 210 - 280 eggs/yr



Which breeds to choose and why - continued

1. Hybrids vs other breeds

- If you want to raise your own ducks, the hybrids are not a good option as the offspring will not have the same characteristics as the parents.

2. Other breeds we have had

- Cayugas - extremely healthy 130 - 180 eggs/yr
- Welsh Harlequin 100 - 150 eggs/yr
- Blue Swedish 100-180 eggs/yr
- Buff 130 - 180 eggs/yr



Whether to include drakes in your flock

- Only get a drake if you want to hatch your own eggs
- Drakes can be hard on the females
- It is recommended to have 7 females per drake (this was recommended for Anconas), but we had problems with 2 drakes for 15 females and had to get rid of one of the males before eye and leg injuries stopped occurring in the females.

of Iowa

Where to buy your waterfowl

- a. Local hatcheries in Iowa
 - Murray McMurray
 - Hoover's Hatchery
- b. Mail order we have used
 - Metzger Farms - they now have 2 locations
- c. Cackle - went here to pick up our last group of ducks
- d. Bomgaars, Tractor Supply, and others



Taking care of ducklings

1. Equipment needed
 - a. Predator proof enclosure
 - We use watering tanks that keep drafts off of the ducklings
 - We put a framed piece of hardware cloth over the tank and secure it with boards or bricks to keep predators out of the tank but allow for ventilation



Taking care of ducklings - continued

- b. Heat lamp(s)
- c. Chick waterer and feeders
- d. Thermometer
- e. Nonskid mats (shelving liners)
- f. Large round cake pan with a cooling rack over it to set the waterer over so the bedding does not get as wet



Taking care of ducklings - continued

2. Feed

We follow recommendations for duckling feed in Storey's Guide to Raising Ducks

- a. It is important to use a high quality starter. We use Purina Flock Raiser Crumbles (Niacin).
- b. We manage protein content to prevent angel wing by cutting the feed with rolled oats
- c. Never use medicated chicken feed for ducks!
- d. Ducklings also need chick sized grit. At the beginning, it needs to be mixed in with their crumbles
- e. Throw out wet food and provide fresh, temperature-appropriate water each day



Taking care of ducklings - continued

3. Bedding

We use pine wood shavings

- Do not use cedar -
It is toxic for birds

4. Temperature

- Follow temperature recommendations from the hatchery where you get your ducklings and drop the temperature by 5 degrees each week by moving the heat lamp up. That said, always watch how your ducklings react and that will tell you if you have the proper temperature.
 - Huddled under the light in a ball - too cool
 - All ducklings are in the far corners away from the light - too hot



When and how to blend your ducklings into the rest of the flock

1. Your older birds need to become used to seeing the new birds before you blend the two groups
2. As long as the outdoor temperature is appropriate for their age, the ducklings can spend some time outdoors where the older birds can see them
3. We use what we call a “duck tractor”. This keeps the ducklings safe while they are outdoors and viewable by the rest of the flock.



Our “Duck Tractor”



When and how to blend your ducklings into the rest of the flock - continued

- We use flexible fencing that runs from the door of our coop out to the duck tractor and then let the ducklings walk out to the duck tractor on their own.
- After about a week or two, our babies usually escape the flexible fencing and mix themselves in with the rest of the flock.



When and how to blend your ducklings into the rest of the flock - continued

- Once they are together outside, we have the ducklings sleep with the older birds at night, except we use our screen panels to separate them in the coop. They can see each other but not physically interact. At this point, we no longer give the ducklings food and water at night.
- After about a week or two, we take down these panels and they are completely integrated.
- Our geese have their own permanent enclosed panels in the coop.



Raising Free Range Waterfowl

Housing at night is needed
- at night they sleep in a
secure coop



Raising Free Range Waterfowl - continued

Water - drinking and swimming

- You do not need a pond in order to raise waterfowl. Something like a kiddie pool will suffice for bathing and drinking. We refill ours at least once a day.
- Ducks and Geese need a source of water that is deep enough to rinse their sinuses. So they need to be able to submerge their heads.



Raising Free Range Waterfowl - continued

Equipment for feed

- a. Any kind of open bowl can work for feed and grit(s)
- a. When it is rainy, their food needs to be kept dry
 - o We use poultry feeders with large rain hats on top or we put the bowls where they won't get wet



Raising Free Range Waterfowl - continued

Our birds will go outside if the temperature is above 10 degrees F.

However, make sure they always have protection from the elements when outside.

In Winter, they especially need protection from cold winds.

In the Summer heat, they need shady spots to be able to sit.



Raising Free Range Waterfowl - continued

They will want to help you garden if you let them.

Sometimes this is fun, unless they decide they like to eat what you are planting.

You may need to fence off certain areas of your garden if they like the taste of something that you want to harvest (in our garden, this is especially greens and cruciferous vegetables.)



Raising Free Range Waterfowl - continued

We use solar poultry netting from Premier 1 to surround our gardens.

It is turned on at night to keep raccoons out, but off during the day so we don't shock the birds.

But the fencing is enough to keep them from getting into the garden and eating things we don't want them to eat.



Raising Free Range Waterfowl - continued

The ducks and geese are able to go in and out of all of our flower beds. But you will want to watch in case they like to eat any of your flowers.



We need to fence off our Clematises or the geese will eat them. The birds do help control grasshoppers, Japanese beetles, and other insects in the flower beds.



Nutrition

Food

- a. Food costs
- b. Keep feed dry
- c. Never feed moldy food
- d. Toss wet food at the end of the day
- e. Types of food (this is what we use)
 - Layena
 - Purina Duck Feed pellets
 - Oats / corn / wheat berries / rye

Grit / oyster shell / eggshell



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Nutrition - continued

Treats

- Mealworms - we grow our own
- Earthworms, beetles, and other insects
- Lettuce/ Greens
- Wheat and rye berries



Bedding

- straw/hay
- Keep their bedding dry; never use moldy bedding

Egg Laying

- usually first thing in the morning



Predators

Types of predators

- Hawks
- Eagles
- Fox
- Raccoon
- Coyotes
- Dogs
- Cats
- Mink
- Weasel



Predator Deterrents

- Secure coop
- Get them in the coop before dark
- Scarecrow - move his location
- Shiny reflective tape
- Geese
- Owl decoys - move their location



Marketing

- Local Food Guide - Buy Fresh Buy Local
- Website - we get a lot of business from individuals searching on the internet
- Social Media (FB Marketplace, Craigslist,...)
- Face to face marketing of our product to potential buyers (restaurants, stores, ...)

Other potential marketing opportunities

- Sales of processed ducks
- Grocery Stores / Health Food Stores
- Farmer's Markets



Regulatory Issues

Egg Number from the state - Extension Service

- Only required for chicken eggs in Nebraska at this time.
- We requested an egg number out of an abundance of caution, to be proactive, and from the advice of our extension agent.
- We don't know the rules for egg numbers in other states.



Inspections by the County

- For us to sell eggs to restaurants and individuals, we need to be inspected by the county. They do this on an annual basis.
- FDA inspection annually instigated by the county.
- It is very important for you to determine which inspections, if any, are required in your area. These are the rules/inspections for us in Nebraska. Your regulatory issues/inspections may differ in your area.



Egg Safety

- If you wipe off your eggs, they need to be stored in a refrigerator at 45 degrees F or lower (but not so they freeze!) We wipe our eggs off if they are dirty.
- Eggs should stay fresh being wiped off and refrigerated for 2-3 months from the lay date
- Float test (can google this)
- Warning label for storage and handling safety should be on each carton you sell

Safe Handling Instructions:

To prevent illness from bacteria:
Keep refrigerated at 45 degrees F or below. Cook eggs until yolks are firm.
Cook foods containing eggs thoroughly.

Supplies for selling eggs

- Cartons - eggcartons.com
- Labels

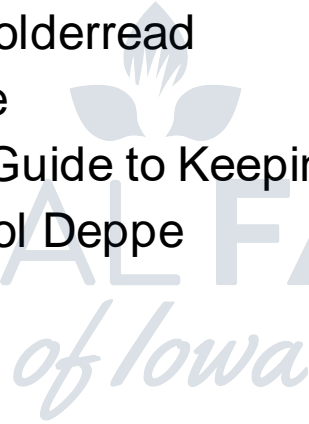
Avery.com - template to design your label and print yourself or have

Avery print them

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Resources

- Story's Guide to Raising Ducks - Dave Holderread
- The Book of Geese - Dave Holderread
- Duck Eggs Daily - Lisa Steele
- The Modern Homesteader's Guide to Keeping Geese - Kirsten Lie-Nielsen
- The Resilient Gardener - Carol Deppe
- Cackle Hatchery
- Metzger Farms



Questions???

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