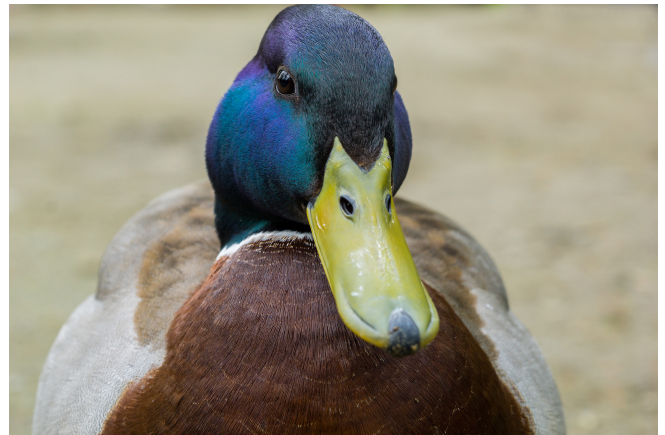




Duck Care Information

Ducks often make very good pets and can thrive in the right environment. They love to forage around a garden searching in and around plants for tasty grubs and worms. Many ducks also like to eat grass, so they will enjoy grazing on the lawn and keeping the weeds down. You will need to fence them out of your vegetable garden or they may eat it all! Ducks do not often dig (unlike chickens) but they will make little holes in soft or wet earth with their bills, 'drilling' for worms. Let the ducks in when you are digging in your veggie garden– they will have a wonderful time finding earthworms and other treats.

Husbandry: All birds are predisposed to feet problems (pododermatitis) if they are kept on an incorrect surface. This problem is particularly common in ducks and it is extremely important to ensure that you have the correct flooring. Avoid wire and concrete floors as this predisposes to damage to the bottom of their feet.



Ducks love water and use at least 1 litre of drinking water per duck per day. They need water to keep their eyes, bills, feet and feathers in good condition. The water should be at least deep enough for them to stick their whole head into and to wash their body. The water container needs to have a shallow edge so that the ducks can get out again easily if they happen to climb in. They love pools where they can climb in and splash. A kids pool (ie. clam shell) or a tub about 20-30cm deep is perfect. Supervise access to swimming water until you are sure that the ducks can get in and out of the pool easily. Old baths are not ideal because they are slippery inside and ducks can find it hard to get out. Although ducks are usually great swimmers, they can still potentially drown if they are forced to be in a water-only environment where they cannot get out of.

Housing: Ducks need to be kept in a secure pen or house when you are not at home that will protect them from predators. To be secure, housing needs to have solid sheeting or welded mesh (with wire at least 1.2mm thick) on the roof, floor and walls. Provide as much space as possible for each duck and make sure there is adequate protection from the weather elements.

Duck housing should be out of the sun and should provide wind protection. Ducks don't generally really like to be in direct sun for prolonged periods of time. Metal housing in particular should be insulated or shaded to avoid it becoming dangerously hot inside (ducks can die from heat stress if they are overheated so precautions must be taken). Housing must also be well-ventilated.





The duck house or pen should be easy to clean as ducks defecate (pass faeces) a lot. Rice hulls are an excellent pen surface for ducks as they are soft but last a long time and also drain very well. Rake the rice hulls over each day. Do not use bare concrete or pavers over more than one third of the pen floor or your ducks will likely develop sores on their soft feet.

Inside the house, provide a 'private' spot for a nest (a sturdy cardboard box on its side, or an old lawnmower catcher will do). Keep the nest topped up with clean mulch, wood shavings or straw. Ducks often bury their eggs in the nest. Ducks don't generally need a perch as they will often sleep on the floor however it is good to provide them with a number of different options.

Keep their food container inside the duck house under cover so it doesn't get wet. Keep the water and food at least a metre apart to discourage them from dribbling water in their food. Ideally, put the water over an area that drains well. Sitting the water container over a drainage pit or platform wider than the water container and filled with smooth large pebbles is ideal.

If breeding is not desired then it is important to keep males and females separate.

Diet: Ducks kept in a clean environment and fed good food are generally very robust and hardy animals. Feeding your duck a complete and balanced diet is essential to ensure they live a long and happy life. Ducks should be fed a commercially-prepared, age-appropriate food as their main diet. Ducks should be provided with suitable vegetables, insects and occasional fruits to supplement the commercial diet. Zucchini, peas, leafy greens, corn, vegetable peels, non-citrus fruit and worms are suitable. Check with your veterinarian and/or an experienced duck owner if you're unsure about the safety of a particular food item.

More in detail general recommendations are as follows:

Up to three weeks of age: Duck starter crumbles are ideal. This is a high nutrient feed with a protein level of around 18-20%. In general it is best to avoid chicken feed at this age as it is deficient in some of the nutrients that growing ducks need.

3 - 20 weeks of age: Ducklings can now be fed a good quality grower food suitable for ducks or for pullets (young chickens). The protein level for this food should be around 15%.



20 weeks and older: The ducks can now be fed a good quality layer or breeder food suitable for adult ducks or chickens. Pellets or mixed grain are best. Calcium supplements can also be offered to ducks in lay if needed.





Supplement the commercial diet with suitable vegetables, insects and fruit. Also remember that ducks need plenty of clean water provided to wash their food down with.

Do not feed: Popcorn, high amounts of bread, chocolate, onion, garlic, avocado or citrus fruit

Although bread is commonly given to ducks, excessive amounts are not good for them. Ensure any bread or bread products are only ever given as an occasional treat.

Common problems: Lethargy and weight loss are common symptoms that unwell ducks may show. Unfortunately, these symptoms are not specific to any particular disease and a consultation with an experienced avian veterinarian is recommended.

Worm burdens are common as most ducks are kept on soil or sand; both of which provide a good environment for the worms to breed. Many of the deworming medications that are sold through pet shops are ineffective so it is best to discuss your planned worming protocol with your vet to ensure that it will be effective. External parasites are also common and once again many of the treatment products sold at pet shops are ineffective.

Ducks are susceptible to a range of infections that can cause symptoms including respiratory disease.

Reproductive diseases are common. Ducks with reproductive disease can show a range of symptoms with the most common being an enlarged or distended coelom. These diseases can be very serious and life-threatening however can be successfully treated in many situations.

We recommend health check-ups every 6-12 months for ducks. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to get in contact with us.

