

Raising Ducks – 9 Best Tips for Keeping Ducks Happy and Healthy



Raising Ducks – My Best Tips to Guide You Toward Successfully Raising Ducks

Raising ducks is different than raising chickens, although you can be successful raising ducks and chickens together. Some modifications need to be addressed when raising ducks, and they add a new dimension to your barnyard.

(Raising as many different animals and Poultry as we do, people often ask what is the best way to get started with a particular species. Many times the questions involve raising ducks. I wrote down a few of the best tips I have for raising ducks)



Ducklings arrive in the feed stores and hatcheries later than the chicks usually. I have my own unproven theories about why this is the way it is. Ducklings are cute little fluffy mess makers. Not long after you bring them home, you will realize that with even a small amount of water, ducks will make a big wet mess. Those cute little webbed feet can sure track a lot of water around their brooder. You will need the best tips for raising ducks.

Ducklings grow incredibly fast, and soon are consuming a huge quantity of starter ration. The good news, and more realistic reason that ducklings are available later in the spring is, that is when the ducks lay more eggs for the hatcheries to incubate. Ducks will lay year round, but they lay more eggs during the natural mating season of March through June. Once you bring home a few ducklings you will be glad of two things.

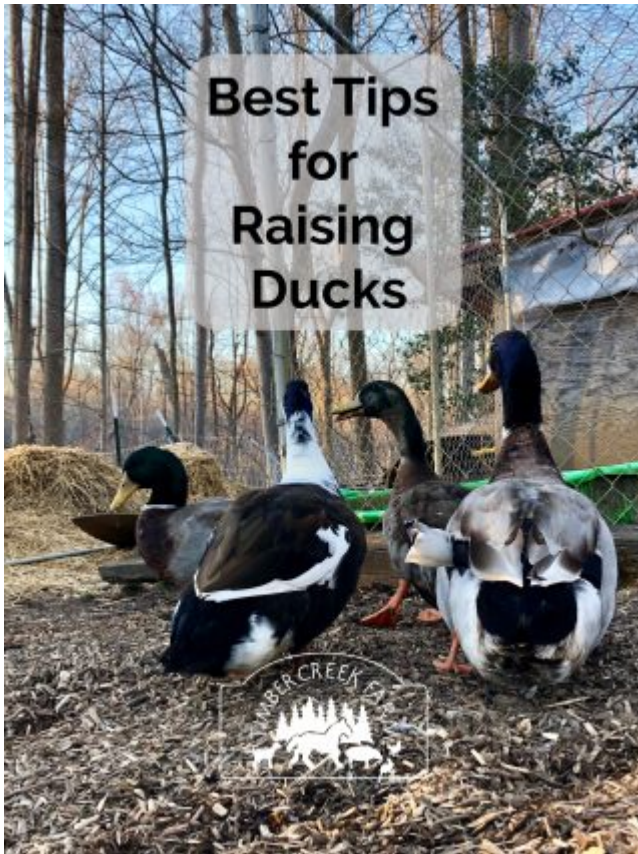
- **1. Ducklings grow very quickly**
- **2. Because the ducklings grow quickly they can go outside earlier than chicks. (They will still need time in the brooder with a heat lamp to start off) Being**

hatched later in spring means the weather is warmer and the ducklings can move outside sooner.

You will be very glad when they are big enough to go outside to their duck pen and coop. If you were housing them in your bathtub in your house, you will be glad to have your bathroom again. If you were keeping them in a toddler swimming pool, it will be nice to not clean it up three times a day. (or more!) This is one of the best pieces of advice concerning raising ducks.

Moving the Ducks to the Great Outdoors

Ducklings are a good addition to your backyard or homestead. Ducks are reliable egg layers, easy to keep, and excellent at foraging for grubs, slugs and snails in addition to other insects and weeds. They are happiest if they can have some free foraging time every day, but can be successfully kept in a large pen as long as you bring them a varied diet of grasses, and insects. Dried meal worms, watermelon, and salad greens are favorite treats that also add valuable protein and nutrition.



Housing

Ducks do need secure housing particularly at night, to protect them from predators. Since ducks are extremely cold hardy, our structure has large ventilation spaces at the tops of the walls, covered by hardware cloth. This allows maximum air circulation for preventing odor buildup inside the coop. In the coldest parts of winter, we can cover the “windows” with plastic to keep the coop warmer, if necessary.

Do Ducks Need a Perch?

The coop or duck house is low to the ground although we can fit inside to clean it out. There is no need for perches as ducks do not roost on a bar like chickens. Providing straw for nesting and to keep the floor a little drier helps. I pile more straw in the corners to encourage the hens to lay eggs there. This keeps the eggs out of the traffic lanes and keeps the eggs cleaner.

Surrounding our duck house is a large pen. The ducks can be returned to the pen when we are not watching them or if a predator is in the area. At night they are closed in the duck house.



Water

Water is extremely important to ducks. They need to be able to dip their entire bill into some water. In addition, they love to swim and preen their feathers in the water. You can get away with not having a wading pool or small pond for them to swim in, but they will occasionally need enough water for a bath. When it is too cold for swimming in the pools, our ducks will still stand in the water bowl and splash around. All that being said, I do recommend giving the ducks as much access to a swimming pool or pond as possible. The ducks will love you for it!

Food

Ducks are excellent foragers and can find a good diet on their own. We do supply additional pellets for them, free choice, to supplement what they find when foraging. When the ducks can't forage due to weather or other reasons, they will, of course, eat more of the pellets. Ducks naturally do very well on a foraging diet. You can read more about feeding ducklings in this post. While ducklings are usually easy keepers and resistant to disease and illness, another possible, yet rare complication is called Limberneck in ducks. This is a form of botulism usually contracted from infected fly larvae or moldy food. Read more about this syndrome in this post.

No Bread!

No matter what age group of ducks you are feeding, restrain yourself from feeding bread to them. The majority of a duck's diet should be from grasses and plants. Feeding bread doesn't contribute to their nutritional needs and can cause wing deformity, bone growth issues, and lameness which can lead to a predator being able to catch the duck easier.

In the growing season, you can throw in chickweed, smart weed,

grass clippings, plantain leaves and household or garden salad greens, if the ducks can't forage for their own greens and bugs. Raising ducks is an excellent way to reduce the insect life in your yard or farm and garden.

Fencing

Many of the domestic duck breeds can not fly well at all. They can fly low across the ground level but rarely take off to any height. Fencing does not need to be high to keep ducks in. The only reason to have a high, covered fenced run would be so you can stand up in the covered fenced run.

In order to protect your ducks from predators, consider higher fencing and covering the duck run with more wire fencing.

(Here's an image to save to your pinterest boards for later reading.)

The Best Tips for Raising Ducks



Timber Creek Far

Eggs

Ducks will lay anywhere from 100 to 300 eggs per year depending on the breed of duck. The eggs are edible, and can be used for your breakfast or cooked in any dish calling for eggs. Many people prefer the slightly stronger flavor of duck eggs. Duck eggs are excellent for baking because they have a slightly higher fat content and richness.

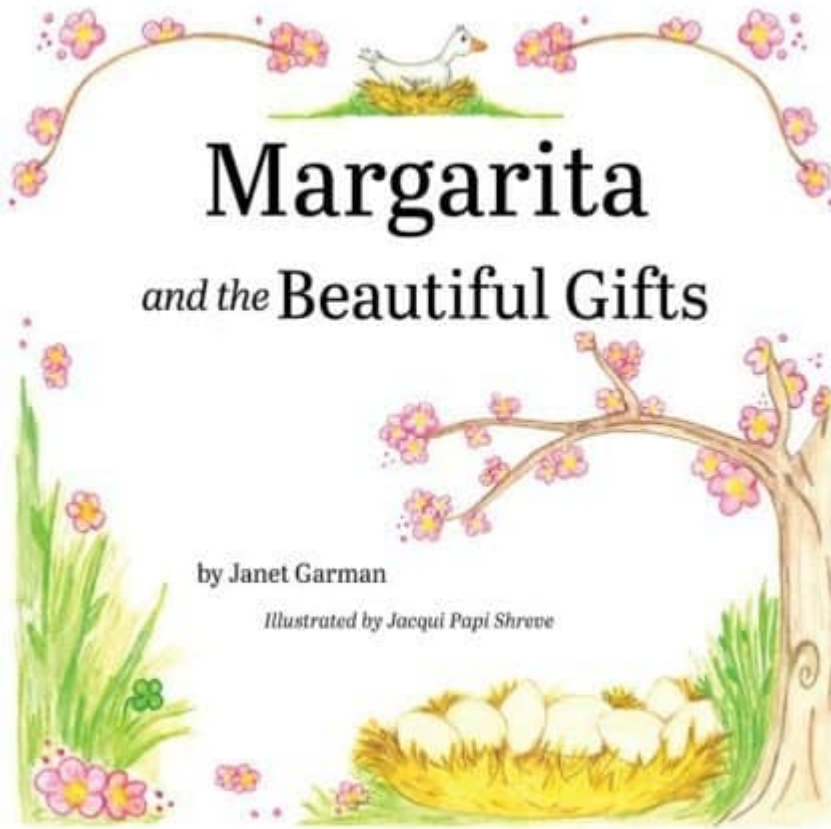
I love raising ducks and enjoy the joyful fun they add to our farm. Share you duck raising stories in the comments! We love to hear how you are raising your poultry, too.



If you enjoyed this post, please consider saving it to your Pin board on Pinterest. Here's an image I made for this purpose.



Read my new children's book. A storybook about two of our ducks here on the farm.



Additional Reading

Backyard Poultry Mag.com

Three Tips for Feeding Ducklings