

Living with a Broody Duck



Margarita has been a broody duck twice in her life. Both times she followed a similar pattern which is characteristic of a broody duck. Meet our broody duck, Margarita and her mate, Jimmy Buff. We have had them on the farm since they were ducklings needing a home. They have been in a committed relationship ever since.

The Process of Collecting Eggs by a Broody Duck

The first step in the process seems to be an obsession with collecting eggs. But not all eggs are worthy. Some will be collected and then later rejected. Some will be rejected at

first sight and not pulled into the nest at all. Having 6 drakes and 4 hens, I have a hard time believing that any duck eggs are not fertilized here, but I will allow this to remain a mystery.

After the magic number of eggs has been reached, a nest is built up around the eggs. Ducks seem to like a deep nest, at least our broody momma does. She tucks herself into the nest on top of the eggs and settles in. This is when the fun starts.



Entering the duck house one morning, I hear hissing and a strange quacking coming from the corner. Yes, Margarita has settled in for the duration. She does not want me to approach the nest but she is too sweet a girl to make a real threat to me. So she sits and hisses, stretching out her neck and acting as mean as she can.



Broody Duck Survival Skills

If I get too close, she will leave the nest, and run outside. I think this is a survival skill, and she is hoping I will chase her and leave the eggs alone. I just want her to walk around for a minute, get a drink, maybe take a swim and clean up her feathers a bit. I have placed a bowl of water and food near the nest. Right now it is very warm and humid, so I am a little worried about her in the heat. I am hoping that she will know if she needs to get up and get a drink but I put it right there to make it easy for her.

Check the Eggs by Candling

It's a good idea to candle the eggs after the first few days of the broody duck setting on them. If they are not developing, sneak them out of the nest and dispose of them. The smell of a rotten egg that has exploded is hard to forget.

(or wash off of your hands!)



One thing I have noticed both this time and last year when Margarita also sat on a clutch of eggs is she seems to know which ones are not viable. Occasionally she will reject an egg from the nest. It will be rolled out onto the floor of the duck house. A few times last year the eggs would sometimes be removed from the house all together and placed outside. One of life's mysteries.

In the meantime, Jimmy Buff seems happy to hang with his guy friends doing guy stuff.



Oh the Waiting!

So now we wait. We are on Day 7 of the usual 28 day development for ducklings. Three long weeks to go! Three weeks of trying to keep Margarita comfortable and hydrated and cool. Three weeks of waiting to see if we will get cute little ducklings here on the farm. Three weeks of hoping she does not reject all the eggs or get tired of being broody and abandon the nest. So many things can go wrong. But, we hope for the best and accept the things we cannot change, right?

Update 2016

Once again, just like clockwork, Margarita has become broody. She is in the initial phase of collecting eggs and building a nest. Soon, she will set again, if this year is anything like the past few years. Margarita will set, and Jimmy Buff will stand guard. Stay tuned. Last year we had to deal with a pesky snake stealing the eggs. Wonder what this year's attempt at ducklings will bring. Maybe this the year Margarita will be successful at hatching ducklings here on the farm.