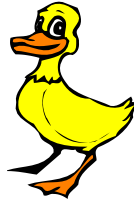




## FACT SHEET - DUCKS



### TERMS:

<b><i>Drake</i></b>	adult male – usually with colourful plumage
<b><i>Duck or hen</i></b>	plain colouring so as to camouflage herself when incubating eggs or caring for her young
<b><i>Duckling</i></b>	baby duck – can run, swim and find food as soon as they are hatched. A duckling grows quickly, has feathers within a month and can fly in 5-8 weeks.
<b><i>Flock</i></b>	a group of ducks



### INTERESTING FACTS:

- When a duckling hatches it has a downy plumage.
- A duckling grows outer feathers by 5–8 weeks of age.
- In late summer ducks lose all their feathers (called moulting) and grow new feathers.
- When new feathers grow many ducks fly (migrate) to warmer lands for the winter.
- Ducks have an oil gland at the base of their tail, which they use to water-proof their outer feathers to protect them against the cold water.
- Under the outer layer of feathers is a soft layer of small curly feathers called down.
- Down feathers trap air under the outside feathers keeping the duck warm.
- Ducks are generally monogamous although this bond may only last one year.
- Only the female of “dabbling ducks” quack. The males never “quack”.
- Most ducks breed once a year and tend to make a nest before breeding.
- Not all ducks have the same incubation period – mallard varieties are generally 26-29 days and Muscovy ducks are 33-35 days.
- Ducks feed on a variety of food – grasses, aquatic plants, fish, insects, small amphibians, worms and small molluscs.
- Ducks live from 2 – 20 years.
- Ducks are related to geese and swans.
- Ducks, geese and swans have webbed feet and spread their toes and webbing which makes a paddle to swim with.

- Contrary to popular belief, ducks do not require a pond or other open water in which to swim.
- Ducks are not subject to parasites, fleas or ticks.
- Because an idle floating duck or a duck squatting on land cannot react or move quickly, “a sitting duck” has come to mean “an easy target”.



## **TYPES OF DUCKS:**

- Diving ducks and sea ducks feed deep underwater.
- Dabbling ducks feed on the surface of water or on land – diving ducks are heavier than dabbling ducks thus taking off to fly is more difficult.
- Mergansers can catch and swallow large fish.
- Dredging ducks pull up waterweed, worms and small molluscs out of mud.



## **BREEDS:**

### **Types of Australian Ducks**

Australian Wood Duck, Blue-Billed Duck, Burdekin Duck, Chestnut Teal, Freckled Duck, Garganey, Grey Teal, Mountain Duck, Musk Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Pink-eared Duck, Plumed Whistling Duck, Spotted Whistling Duck, Wandering Whistling Duck, White-eyed Duck

### **Non-native Duck common to Australia**

Northern Pintail, Northern Mallard, Aylesbury, Indian Runner, Khaki Campbell, Muscovy, Pekin, Rouen

*For photos of Australian ducks: [www.ozanimals.com](http://www.ozanimals.com)*



## **MALE OR FEMALE:**

Sexing ducklings is not easy, and so they are usually sold unsexed. When grown, the sexes may be distinguished by secondary characteristics, for example, in some breeds the males have a mainly green head, whereas the females do not. The rules for sexing by colour are dependent on

the breed. Ducks can also be sexed by their voices from the time they are about 6 weeks old. The females will begin to quack while the males' voices sound hoarse, like they have laryngitis. Muscovy ducks do not quack at all. Their voice sounds like a “hissing” sound.

## The Australian Wood duck – interesting facts



female



male

The **Australian Wood Duck** is a dabbling duck found throughout much of Australia. The male is grey with a dark brown head and mottled breast. The female has white stripes above and below the eye and mottled underparts.

The Australian Wood Duck is commonly found on farmland with dams, grasslands, open woodlands and wetlands. They eat grasses, clover and other herbs, and occasionally, insects. It prefers to forage by dabbling in shallow water, or in grasslands and crops.

Australian Wood Duck nests in cavities in trees or in nest-boxes above or near water. The nest is made with a pile of down. The female incubates them while the male stands guard. Once the ducklings are ready to leave the nest, the female flies to the ground and the duckling will leap to the ground and follow their parents



### INCUBATION:

Any egg that is fertile has the potential to hatch. Eggs to be hatched must be handled carefully. Do not roll eggs over and over, jolt them sharply, or handle them with dirty hands.

#### Points to remember:

- If possible do not clean the eggs – it removes the protective film on the shell that reduces dehydration and helps screen out pollutants.
- Choose eggs that have normal shells and are average to large in size.
- The normal incubation time for ducks derived from Mallards varies from 26 to 29 days but Muscovies require 33 to 35 days.
- Incubating eggs must be turned for successful hatches. Turning is most critical during the first 2 weeks of incubation.

- The first eggs will pip (have a small crack in the shell) 48 hours prior to the hatching date. Ducklings require 24 to 48 hours to completely rim the shell and exit. Newly hatched birds are wet and exhausted and should be left for 12-24 hours to gain strength and dry off.



## **RAISING DUCKINGS:**

Day old ducklings have bright eyes, tiny wings, miniature webbed feet, a shovel-like bill and, given the correct environment, grow at an astounding rate. It only takes 8 to 12 weeks for a newly hatched duckling to transform into a healthy young adult.

### **Points to remember:**

- Ducklings must be kept warm and dry and free from drafts.
- Dry bedding with good footing is essential to prevent spraddled legs or disease.
- Fresh food and water is required for healthy ducks.
- Protection from predators is paramount.
- Do not overcrowd. Injuries and disease are common if ducklings don't have enough space to move.



## **DUCKS are sociable birds:**

Ducks are highly social animals and this means they need other ducks to live with. As they are social animals they get along very well with each other and seldom fight. They are not solitary creatures and will become depressed and lonely quite easily, thus making it difficult for them to survive or thrive. Because they do feel loneliness, isolation, and grief much like humans; leaving a duck alone or caged for long periods of time is not emotionally healthy. It is NOT wise to keep just one duck. It is strongly recommended that you have at least one other duck for company, while having three or four would be best.

## **DUCK PRODUCTS:**

- Ducks are bred intensively for meat production for restaurants.
- Some people eat duck eggs -they are larger and stronger flavoured than chicken eggs.
- Duck eggs are often preferred for baking purposes.

- Down feathers are used for pillows and as linings for comforters/duffles and winter clothing.
- Feathers are used by fly fishers and artisans.
- Feathers are also used as plant fertilizers when composted with other organic materials.
- Duck manure is excellent in organic fertilizers that are high in nitrogen.
- Duck manure provides food for fish in ponds.