

Duck Production

The commercial duck industry relies almost entirely on the White Pekin breed. When commercially fed in close confinement, the White Pekin will reach market weight (7 - 8 pounds) in about 8 weeks. On the farm, they will take several weeks longer to reach the same weight. Standard weights for the mature Pekin duck are 9 pounds for the drake and 8 pounds for the duck.

For the grower of a small flock, White Muscovy ducks are very popular. Muscovy ducks are very good foragers and need very little care. Mature weights for this breed are 10 pounds for the drake and 7 for the duck. Muscovies are marketed at 10 to 17 weeks of age.

Suggested Feeding Program

The nutrient requirements of ducks are quite similar to growing chickens. The largest difference is that ducks require a higher level of niacin and methionine than chickens at a corresponding age.

Ducks are typically provided with two feeds during the growing period. For the first two weeks, ducklings should be fed a 22% protein, medium energy, duck starter ration. This ration is best fed as a 3/32 or 1/8 inch pellet or crumble. If a duck starter is not available, a non-medicated chick starter may prove satisfactory. Ducklings are generally not given medication.

Duck Starter (22% C.P.)

1075	Corn
660	Soybean Meal, 44%
150	Wheat Middlings
60	Meat & Bone Meal
50	Meat Bird Premix
6	Salt
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Duck Grower (16% C.P.)

1465	Corn
330	Soybean Meal, 44%
100	Wheat Middlings
60	Meat & Bone Meal
40	Meat Bird Premix
6	Salt
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At two weeks of age, the ducklings should be changed to a 16% duck grower. This diet, in the form of 3/16 inch pellets, is suitable and most economical until the ducks reach market age. Pellets are recommended instead of mash because they are easier to consume, they reduce waste, and they do not blow away. Pellets can make for a savings of 15 to 20% in the feed required to produce a market duck. Lack of pelleted feed should not discourage farmers who wish to raise ducks on a small scale. Satisfactory results are possible with a mash feed.

Young ducklings at 3 or 4 weeks of age can have access to pasture. Ducks are not as good foragers as geese. It is quite economical to rear ducks without access to pasture. The use of range, however, will save on some feed.

Approximate Feed Requirements (Amt./duck)

Starter (0 - 2 wks.)	2.0 lbs.
Grower (2 - 8 wks.)	20.0 lbs.
Total	22.0 lbs.

Average Feed Conversion = 3.0 lbs. feed/lb. gain



Management Suggestions

- Ducks must have plenty of room to grow. Crowding slows growth and causes high death loss.
- The first two weeks each bird should have 1/2 square foot of floor space. From 2 to 4 weeks, one square foot is needed. If kept confined after 4 weeks, birds should have at least 2 square feet each.
- Allow ducks at least 1 inch of feeder space during the first two weeks and 1½ inch of feeder space from then to market.
- Make sure there is an adequate supply of clean, fresh water. Use waterers of a type the birds cannot get into.
- Provide a 14 hour day by means of natural or artificial light. Provide a night light equivalent to a 15 to 25 watt bulb for each 200 square feet for the first 2 weeks of brooding.
- Provide adequate ventilation without draft.
- Use wood shavings or other suitable litter material to a depth that will control moisture. Add additional litter as needed.
- Ducklings should be debeaked at 3 days of age. Cut the top beak only slightly behind the “nail”.

