

DUCKS AND GEESE CARE GUIDE

Owning ducks and geese can be very rewarding, but it is a big responsibility and a long-term commitment. Did you know that ducks can live up to 12 years and geese up to 20 years?

Ducks and geese are very rewarding and interesting to watch – they are such characters. However, they need plenty of space, usually in a rural setting, and owners who are accepting of the mess they make.



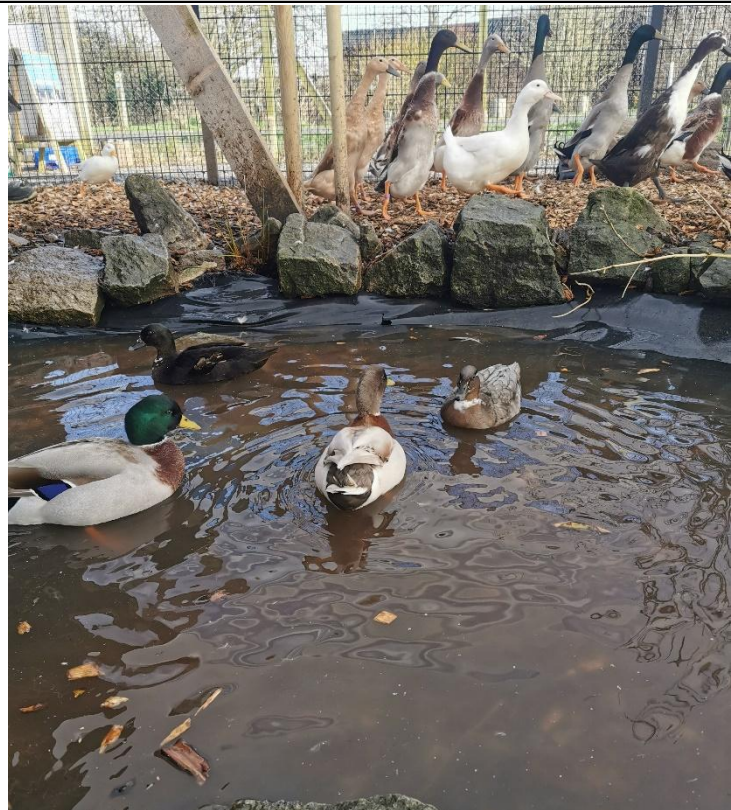
Provide a suitable and stimulating living environment



Our housing requirements aim to ensure the best welfare standards for ducks and geese. Our team are happy to offer advice in purchasing or adapting your set-up to provide the best home before adopting. **We do not have a minimum space requirement** for the adoption of ducks or geese, as this is dependent on the size/breed of the birds and how many are in the flock.

Ducks and geese need a fully secure, fox-proof enclosure, with a pond and a shelter.

They will need a sizeable sleeping area that they can move around comfortably in; sheds, stables and outbuildings are ideal. Accommodation should be well ventilated, weather-proof and allow in natural light. Suitable substrate such as straw should be generously added to inside accommodation, to provide a nesting area for females, and to provide comfort for sleeping. Strong mesh dug into the ground should be used to cover outdoor areas, or high electrical fencing, to prevent predators such as foxes.



Ducks and geese spend much of their time foraging on both land and water.

They will need a large outside area to keep themselves occupied and allow adequate daily exercise. This should be attached to their housing or offer secure free ranging. Trees and plants within their outside area are a good source of shelter, food and enrichment. Submerged and free-floating plants, such as duck weed, oxygenate the ponds water, helping to improve water quality. Sedges and reeds can be planted around the pond's edge, to prevent bank erosion.

A pond should provide clean, fresh water for feeding, bathing and enrichment. Ideally, it should have a mixture of shallow and deeper areas. The water in the pond should be regularly changed, to prevent a build up of bacteria and keep the water as clean as possible. Suitable reinforcement of the pond's edges will be required, as banks may become

eroded. Stones and concrete may be required to keep the shape. As a substrate, wood chips should be avoided as these can harbour disease.

Ducks and geese also enjoy sunbathing and dustbathing. Their accommodation should include access to natural sunlight and either an area of naturally dry ground or something such as a shallow plastic paddling pool filled with a mixture of light soil and fine sand.



Preserve their health by protecting them from pain, injury, and disease

Check your ducks and geese for signs of injury or illness every day and seek veterinary advice if necessary.

If your ducks or geese become ill, a specialist vet would be required; do you know where your nearest exotic/ farm vet practice is located?

Please note ducks and geese should be wormed at least twice a year.

Signs of injury, pain, or disease

It is important to monitor for:

Limping- ducks and geese are prone to feet and leg problems.

Common issues include bumblefoot, frostbite and in larger breeds, arthritis.

A limp could also indicate a broken bone. It is important to ensure that substrate and indoor areas are clean and dry. Ensure your enclosure has no areas for birds to get caught in.



Open wounds- skin can be broken during fighting or mating. The water in ponds should be kept as clean as possible to prevent infection.

Laboured breathing and poor appetite- this can be a sign of stress or *Aspergillus*.

Aspergillus is a fungal infection caused by rotting vegetation or food. It is important to keep replacing food daily, and regularly change substrate to minimise the risk of this infection.

Feathers appearing to stick out- this can be a sign of angel wing. Ensure that feeding is well balanced, with the correct nutrients and not too many calories.

Raystede Centre for Animal Welfare, The Broyle, Ringmer, East Sussex, BN8 5AJ.

Tel: (01825) 880467 E-mail: smallanimals@raystede.org www.raystede.org

President: Morgan Williams. Registered Charity No. 237696. Registered Office: Raystede, Ringmer, East Sussex, BN8 5AJ. Registered in England No. 816674



Provide a nutritious diet and fresh water



Their diet should include:

- Your ducks and geese will find a lot of natural foods in their enclosure, but their diet must also be supplemented with **duck and goose pellets, corn, grit to aid digestion** and small amounts of healthy treats such as fresh **green vegetables, grapes and apples**.
- **Fresh water** available always, as birds can drink a lot throughout the day. This must be separate to their bathing water. Ducks and geese can also receive an apple cider vinegar supplement in their drinking water to promote general health and improve plumage.



Promote natural behaviour and provide appropriate companionship



Ducks and geese should be kept in flocks/small groups, they are social animals so need companionship to keep them happy and healthy.

When introducing new individuals to the flock, plenty of treats should be given to act as a distraction and birds should be supervised at first in case of any fighting. It is perfectly normal if some individuals square up to each other and some pecking occurs while they are asserting their dominance. To minimise bullying within the flock there should be plenty of feeding areas and space.

During the breeding season in spring, there may be increased bullying between males and between males and females. This is normal, due to the change in hormones around that time. It is sometimes easier to have a full male flock or a full female flock, to avoid females being chased and males fighting over females. This sort of behaviour normally subsides after the spring months. Please ensure that you are regularly watching your flock to ensure there are no serious injuries.

Raystede Centre for Animal Welfare, The Broyle, Ringmer, East Sussex, BN8 5AJ.

Tel: (01825) 880467 E-mail: smallanimals@raystede.org www.raystede.org

President: Morgan Williams. Registered Charity No. 237696. Registered Office: Raystede, Ringmer, East Sussex, BN8 5AJ. Registered in England No. 816674



DEFRA Mandatory Registration Process



All captive birds must be registered with DEFRA and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). Since 2021, the UK has had its largest outbreak of avian influenza which is often fatal to birds. By registering your birds with your information, you will help provide a picture of where at-risk birds are in the UK. It will also mean that APHA will be able to contact you and let you know of any outbreaks.

For more information visit the government website: [New mandatory bird registration: what do keepers need to know – Government Vets \(blog.gov.uk\)](#).

It is a legal requirement that all captive birds must be registered with DEFRA. By registering:

- the APHA will contact you with updates and guidance if there's a disease outbreak (such as bird flu) in your area
- You will help prevent the spread of disease and protect all kept birds, including back-yard flocks

If you own birds, or are adopting birds, you must complete a [DEFRA bird registration form.pdf](#) to register them. You can either complete the form and send it via post or email, or you can follow this link <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-as-a-keeper-of-less-than-50-poultry-or-other-captive-birds> to register them online. If you have 50 or more birds, you must fill out the corresponding form: [IRA90 Kept bird registration form - Keeper of 50 or more other captive birds \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#). If you have any queries or would like to discuss the process further with a member of the Small Animals Team, please contact us by email at smallanimals@raystede.org by phone on 01825 880467.

Raystede Centre for Animal Welfare, The Broyle, Ringmer, East Sussex, BN8 5AJ.

Tel: (01825) 880467 E-mail: smallanimals@raystede.org www.raystede.org

President: Morgan Williams. Registered Charity No. 237696. Registered Office: Raystede, Ringmer, East Sussex, BN8 5AJ. Registered in England No. 816674