

# FACT SHEET

by: Usam Stephen, Agricultural Officer I

## Nutrition and Feeding of Ducks

### INTRODUCTION

Proper nutrition is necessary if the ducks are to perform at their maximum genetic potential. The quantity and quality of feed influence growth rate, reproduction, carcass quality, health and eventually cost of production.

Proper duck nutrition means providing a balanced diet with everything needed for growth and development. The feed must include protein, an energy source, vitamins and minerals. The nutritional requirements will vary with the stage of development of the duck.

An abundant supply of cool, clean water is also necessary throughout the life of the duck.

Use feeders and waterers to supply feed and water to the ducks (figure 1).



Figure 1: Poultry Feeders and Waterers

### FEEDING DUCKLINGS 1- 4 WEEKS

Feed ducklings with a high-energy, high protein starter feed (22% Crude Protein) in the form of crumbles for the first 4 weeks. This can either be a commercial duck starter or a chick starter. Feed in this form is easier for the duckling to eat. It reduces wastage and results in good feed to meat conversion. Ducklings should always be full-fed.

A vitamin supplement may also be given once a week to prevent nutritional deficiencies which can lead to physical problems such as bow legs, lameness and weakness.

Provide adequate feeding space for ducklings.

### FEEDING DUCKLINGS 5 WEEKS AND BEYOND

Change the ration after 5 weeks depending on whether you are fattening ducks for meat or rearing breeders.

The protein level in prepared rations for ducks after five weeks of age is reduced. A duck grower/finisher ration should be fed for fatteners but breeders should be fed a grower up to 24 weeks.

If you are preparing rations, supplement the protein using different available protein sources for example commercial fishmeal, poultry meal or soybean meal. These meals should be mixed in a ratio of 1:10 i.e., for every ten units of feed mixed, one unit of the protein source is added.

**If you are fattening, withdraw the fishmeal from any feed at least two weeks before the expected sale since it imparts a fishy taste to the meat.**

### FEEDING BREEDERS

After twenty four weeks of age, feed them with a layer ration in order to prepare them for laying and continue for the duration of the laying life of the duck. Also supply crushed oyster shell to increase the calcium in the diet at least two weeks before the expected lay date. At this stage the breeder may eat 175 - 200 g (7 - 8ozs) feed per day, so adequate feed of good quality should be supplied. Feed twice per day to avoid build up of stale feed in the feeders.

## HELPFUL FEEDING INFORMATION

- Feed is the most expensive input. **Always prevent wastage.**
  - Ensure you get the weight for which you have paid.
  - Do not buy feed that is in wet bags. Spoilage may occur when the feed gets wet.
  - Do not store prepared ration for more than two weeks. The quality of stored feed is reduced over time.
  - Do not store toxic chemicals near to feed since they can contaminate it.
- Protect feed from rats and wild birds since they spread diseases.

### **DO NOT GIVE FEED WITH:**

- Nitro w, (growth enhancer)
- Coccidiostats e.g. Amprol
- Urea
- Antibiotic-NF 180

These will lead to poisoning and death of the ducks.

## ALTERNATIVE FEED SOURCES FOR PREPARING RATIONS

Following are some useful feed sources for preparing rations:

PROTEIN SOURCE	ENERGY SOURCE	MINERALS AND PROTEIN SOURCE
Soybean Meal	Corn	Kudzu
Fish Silage	Rice	Gliricidia
Coconut Meal	Rice Bran	Leucaena
Brewers Yeast	Wheat Middlings	Pigeon Peas
Poultry Meal	Citrus Pulp	Acacia
Chicken Guts	Brewers Grain	Channa
Fish Meal	Molasses	Spinach
Peanut	Cassava	Bodi

Remember: use one part protein for every ten parts energy source.

## COMMON NUTRITIONAL PROBLEMS IN DUCKS

Low levels of protein could result in decreased growth rate and smaller eggs and overall poor performance

Low levels of carbohydrates cause an increase in feed intake and also a reduced growth rate.

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