



RESCUED DUCKLING/GOSLING CARE

(Babies under 4 weeks old)

If you have just had a duck/goose encounter of the closest kind and haven't a clue of what to do, don't panic. Count yourself lucky to have this chance to get to know one of the world's most remarkable little creatures! --By Nancy Townsend

How do I know how old it is? If it is still covered with soft down, it is under 2 weeks old. If you can feel prickly little feathers, it is between 2 and 4 weeks; if you can see some feathers it is over 4 weeks, and fully feathered, it is grown.

What do I keep it in? If you plan to keep it, get a small dog carrier (the plastic kind with a wire door). Otherwise, use a plastic storage box, a cardboard box or basket. To make it feel secure, partially cover the top with something like a towel. Put a towel in the bottom as they shouldn't stand on anything slick.

How do I keep it warm? Waterfowl babies don't need as much warmth as other birds, but they do need a little extra warmth, especially at night, for the first week to 10 days. This can be provided with a lamp and a 100-200 watt bulb set over the container, a heating pad set on low and covered with a towel, or you can get hand warmers at Walmart, sporting goods stores, etc. Once opened, they stay warm for hours. You have to cover them to be sure they aren't too hot and always make sure the baby can move away from the heat source if it gets too hot.

What do I feed it? The best thing is duck or chicken starter purchased at a feed store. IT MUST BE UNMEDICATED FEED. In a pinch, you can give it crushed cereal like Cheerios, crushed dog food, crushed dry cat food, cottage cheese, hard boiled eggs, chopped lettuce, canned peas or chopped green beans. Ducks can feed themselves from birth, but may not recognize the food so put a dab on a finger and put it in its bill to get it started. All food should be mixed with a little water for the first week or two. They can drown easily, so only a shallow dish of water should be used. Don't worry if you have a tiny baby that won't eat. They are nourished by the egg yolk and don't need food during the first 24 to 48 hours, but will usually drink a little water. You can get a package of Vitamins and Electrolytes at any feed store. If you add a scant teaspoon to a gallon of water, that will help give it a good start. Food and water should be kept available all day up to bedtime. Never give it feed without water.

How do I bathe it? As I said, babies can drown easily as they don't have the oil or the feathers for waterproofing for a few weeks. You can put it in a couple of inches of water in a sink, but watch it closely, let it bathe, and give it time to preen (clean its feathers) in a warm place. If it doesn't get dry enough, you can gently use a hair dryer on low.



We invite you to join our new on-line community for parents of ducks and geese, named after our book, *“Duck, Duck, There’s a Goose in the House.”* We hope to create a fun place where we can answer questions and provide tips & advice to help you with your wonderful pet. Just “Like” our page and be sure to introduce yourself and your duck or goose (we would love to see photos). We look forward to your participation!

– Alan & Melissa Townsend
(Father and Mother Goose)



Duck, Duck,
There’s a Goose in the House
JOIN US!

When can I diaper it? Baby diapers can be started at a week or two. If it is over 2 weeks old, skip the diaper and get an expandable harness starting at 4 weeks.

What else does it need? A stuffed toy will be very comforting and give it something to cuddle up with to help keep it warm. Baby waterfowl are not like other birds. You have probably heard that you shouldn't handle a baby bird much. Forget it! This baby wants and needs to be close to you as much as possible. It will run away when you reach for it, but that is only an instinctive survival move. Go ahead and pick it up, and snuggle it close to you quickly so it will feel safe.

Anything else I should know? If you have rescued a wild Mallard duck or Canada gosling, I must tell you that it is illegal to keep it. You are supposed to give it to a wildlife rehabber. However, if it is seriously injured, they may euthanize it. If your baby is injured, I know one-legged ducks, and even several ducks/geese that can't walk that are being raised by happy human parents. If you keep it, you could run into a problem if you need a vet as they aren't supposed to care for them. You might be able to get a permit to keep it, but find out what the rules are first.

Animal shelters are not usually a good option for animals like these since they require specialized care that shelters may not be equipped or staffed to handle.

I would strongly advise not letting a child under 5 or 6 hold the duck even with supervision, and closely supervise older children. Ducklings and goslings can leap quickly out of your hands and get hurt easily.

If you are not able to keep the baby, go to our Facebook Page, “Duck, Duck – There’s a Goose in the House,” or other duck support page, such as “Ducks as Garden Pets.” Someone there may help you find a home for it, or at least point you to a kind and caring wildlife rehabber.



EMERGENCY ADULT DUCK CARE

If you have a seriously injured bird, first try to stop any serious bleeding. Clean the wound gently with peroxide, apply Neosporin and bandage it as well as you can with gauze and medical wrap or tape. If there is no serious bleeding but it is obviously hurt, it is best to put the bird in a quiet, darkened place for a while to let it rest. Stress is equally as serious as the wounds. Provide water and help it drink if it is unable. Do not subject it to children or several people at a time trying to help.

If you must take it to a vet try to find an avian certified vet. Search for a vet near you on the Association of Avian Veterinarians website: <http://www.aav.org/search/custom.asp?id=1803>.

If there aren't any avian vets near you, take the duck to the nearest vet keeping it as comfortable as possible (using a soft towel in a box). They may not know much about ducks, but they can take x-rays, splint a broken wing or leg, stop bleeding, administer antibiotics, etc.

Online duck support Facebook pages can be a big help in many ways. These pages are usually very active, so you should be able to get timely assistance.

BASIC DUCK CARE

If you have come into possession of a healthy duck and haven't a clue how to care for it, read on. Provide it with water and a safe, quiet place to stay. Keep children, pets, etc. away until it has a chance to rest and get used to its surroundings.

If you plan to keep it, go to a feed store and get a bag of scratch (cracked grains) and a bag of unmedicated poultry feed (Purina Layena, Mazuri Waterfowl Feed, Purina Flock Raiser, or any Turkey and Game Bird Feed). They come in crumbles and pellets. I recommend crumbles, but it really doesn't matter. The important thing to look for is the protein level; it should be 14-16%. Also get a bag of grit. Ducks need it to grind their food. Mix the scratch and feed about half and half and keep it and water available to the duck all day (night is optional).

If you don't plan to keep it, here are some emergency foods you can try: Lettuce, dry dog or cat food (crush large chunks), spinach, canned vegetables (mixed, corn, peas, green beans), good grain cereals like Cheerios, dandelion greens, worms, crickets or bread. Bread is not a good diet, but if you have nothing else, give small pieces, whole wheat is best. Ducks are wary of eating new things, so don't assume it isn't hungry if it won't eat at first. You might even try putting a bit in its bill so it will know it tastes okay. It should have food and water available at all times, if possible. Even temporary housing must be safe from predators. Please don't leave a duck outside and unprotected at night even in a fenced-in area. Keep it in the garage, a safe storage shed or bathroom. It will appreciate something soft to sleep on like an old towel.

To plan permanent outdoor housing visit duck Facebook pages. You'll find plenty of folks willing to help you with plans, tell you the pitfalls, and refer you to other links.

Outdoor housing isn't necessary if you diaper it and keep an indoor duck. If the duck is friendly with you, you can probably diaper it with little trouble. Ducks/geese need to bathe. Swimming water is unnecessary. The bathtub is fine for an emergency bath, but they prefer to bathe outside so they can preen in the sun. A small plastic container like a kitty litter pan or storage box works fine and is easily filled and handled. For a large duck or two ducks, you can get a concrete mixing pan from a home improvement store that is easier to dump than a play pool. Be prepared for the mess that a lot of splashed water makes, especially with a duck/goose dabbling in it.

Watching a duck swim is very pleasant, but you might be better off with the small container of bathing water. Providing a pond sounds like a great idea and a beautiful scene comes to mind, but know that cleaning it is not an easy chore. Ducks/geese form habits easily, so don't start something you might not be able to continue. I think people enjoy their feathered kids much more when they keep things simple. These creatures are very happy with most anything you provide as long as they can keep clean, are well-fed and can be with you. They truly are one of the most adaptable and enjoyable creatures.