

MALLARD INFORMATION SHEET

GENERAL INFORMATION: This information sheet is provided only as a starting point for raising mallards. It is highly recommended that you read multiple articles from the Internet to include:

- **A Quick Guide to Raising Ducks:** <http://www.motherearthnews.com/homesteading-and-livestock/raising-ducks-zmaz70mazglo.aspx#axzz3DFTG9PGE>

Mallard ducks have an average lifespan of 10-12 years. Mallards mature at a faster pace than chickens generally laying their first eggs the Spring of their first year. Mallard ducks are among the easiest domesticated birds to raise and maintain.

1. **MALLARD DUCKLINGS:** Young mallard ducklings have a low mortality rate but should be carefully cared for until they reach 6-9 weeks old; this include adequate heat, protection from drafts and the elements, and a clean environment.
2. **FEEDING DUCKLINGS:** Ducklings grow at a rapid rate and require higher protein feed than chicks. I feed ducklings a mixture of ½ Game Bird starter (28% protein) and ½ Chick Grower (18% protein) until they are 6 weeks old and then transition to Chick Grower over the next three weeks. Purina Flock Raiser Crumbles would be perfectly suitable for young ducklings.
3. **FEEDING ADULTS:** Personally, I feed adult birds 17% chicken laying pellets. Ducks can develop a condition called “angel wing” or become over weight if they are consistently feed a high protein or high calorie diet.
4. **HEAT:** Like chickens, young ducks require a draft free environment with supplemental heat during the first five-weeks of their life. Generally, you should start day-old poults off at 90° F for the first week dropping the temperature 5° each week until the poults are 5 weeks old (90, 85, 80, 75, 70). Be sure that there is sufficient room in the brooder for the poults to escape the heat if they become overheated.
5. **BEDDING:** Like chickens, slippery bedding such as slick newspaper can cause spraddle legs and should be avoided. The use of wood shavings as brooder bedding is not generally recommended as ducklings are excessively messy and love to play in their water. Personally, I raise young ducklings on ½ inch hardware cloth placed over removable, cleanable trays.
6. **WATER:** In order to wash down their food, ducklings need to be able to dip their entire bill in water; however, their water dish should not be so deep or so wide as to permit them to play in the water. When raised by their mother, a duckling coats their soft down with water repellent oil by rubbing against their mother. Ducklings raised in a brooder are not water proof and can easily become chilled or drown if permitted to swim or play in water. Therefore, ducklings should not be exposed to a swimming area until they are completely feathered.
7. **PLACING WITH MATURE DUCKS:** Male mallards (drakes) are sexually aggressive and will drown young females if they are placed together with access to a pond or swimming area. Young mallards, therefore, should not be mixed with grown males until they are fully grown.
8. **MALE AGRESSION:** Male mallards (drakes) are sexually aggressive and have been known to shun, harass, and/or kill other competing males. This seems to be more of a problem when ducks are kept in a smaller pen rather than a large, open area. To lessen the likelihood of conflict, I generally maintain a 2:1 or 3:1 female/male ratio (two or three females for each male).
9. **HOUSING:** Mallard can do well in a small amount of space or in shared space with chickens; however, they prefer larger open space that contains bushes, brush, or other natural cover areas. They do love the water but do not require a pond to mate. Mallards do not require sophisticated shelter but should have protection from cold winter wind (such as a dog house or brush pile) and shaded area during the summer heat. Most of my adult mallards prefer to spend their nights outside even during the coldest of East Texas nights.
10. **FLIGHT:** Mallard ducks are excellent flyers and can fly extended distances. Domesticated mallards may leave home and never return although such instances have never been reported by among our customers. To increase the likelihood that your mallards stay put (a) raise the ducklings as close to your pond as possible, (b) consider clipping the flight feathers on one wing just prior to releasing them, and (c) develop a routine feeding time and place. CAUTION: clipping a duck’s wing increases the dangers that they can be caught by a predator.
11. **PREDATORS:** Unfortunately, customers frequently report that their ducklings have been killed by dogs, wild animals, and occasionally snakes. To avoid such calamities, you should consider building a predator proof pen near your pond. Adult mallard ducks can usually avoid predators by flying away; however, female ducks that are laying or sitting on eggs, unfortunately, are “sitting ducks.”
12. **GENDER:** Male ducks will have the SAME feathering color and pattern as females until they near maturity, 14-18 weeks old. Generally, the first noticeable sign that a mallard is a male is a green tinge to his bill that occurs around 8-10 weeks. Female ducks will also “quack” at this time while males will have more of a raspy whisper.

HUMAN SALMONELLA INFECTIONS FROM BABY POULTRY: Baby poultry can carry harmful germs called Salmonella. After you touch a chick, duckling, or other baby bird, or anything in the area where they live and roam, WASH YOUR HANDS so you don't get sick!

