

AEC STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

SOP No:	21
SOP	Ducks and Geese
Scientific Name:	<i>Anas sp</i> (duck) and <i>Anser sp</i> (goose)
Category:	2, 3, 4, 5
Approval Level:	Category 2: School Principal may delegate Category 3: School Principal may NOT delegate Category 4: Animal Ethics Committee Category 5: Animal Ethics Committee
Authority:	Government Schools – Department for Education and Childhood Development Animal Ethics Committee Independent and Catholic Schools - Non Government Schools Animal Ethics Committee
Authority Approval Date:	1 August 2010
Last update	22 January 2019
Disclaimer:	<i>This document may be updated at any time. You should check the web site regularly to ensure that you are meeting the most recent recommendations. If you note any concerns with the information provided (inadequate, incorrect) please contact the relevant AEC</i>
Licensing Requirement:	Not applicable
Compliance Requirement:	The keeping of this species requires approval from the School Principal or the AEC. It is recommended that this Standard Operating Procedure be followed as a minimum in the provision of appropriate care and housing for this species.

General Information:

Physical Attributes:

- **Size:** ducks up to 600 mm in length, geese up to 900 mm
- **Weight:** drake 1 kg–6.5 kg, duck 800 g–4.5 kg; gander 4 kg–14 kg, goose 4 kg–9kg
- **Age at adult size:** 6-12 months
- **Weight at birth:** approximately 50 g
- **Incubation period:** ducks 28-33 days, geese 35 days
- **Range of breeding ages:** ducks from 6 months, geese from 12 months
- **Body temperature:** 40°C – 41°C
- **Heart rate:** 180-340 beats/minute

Behaviour:

The normal behaviour of ducks or geese is to be alert with a level carriage. They often waddle about and peck as they investigate the surroundings. They emit characteristic quacking or honking noises when their territories are entered.

Environment:

Ducks and geese appreciate a ranging situation but can be raised successfully in more confined situations. Ducks and geese prefer temperatures between 20 0°C and 28°C. Temperatures below 10 °C and above 32 °C cause stress.

Birds kept in sheds must not be kept in the dark.

Draughts and chilling winds should be avoided. Ventilation is required to prevent ammonia build-up in intensive situations. Sufficient shelter is required to protect from extremes of temperature, wind and rain and direct sunlight.

Bedding should be clean, dry litter in the form of rice hulls, shavings from non-treated timber, straw or sand. The area should be checked and cleaned as required. Little cleaning is required if the litter is deep

AEC STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

and kept dry.

Ducks generally require little assistance in setting up their nests. Nesting boxes 300 mm x 400 mm with 400 mm-high sides or, if available, plastic drums of approximately 25 L capacity with the bases cut out, leaving small lips to hold back nesting materials, can be provided. One nesting box or drum can service three or four birds. The nest should be reasonably dark and be large enough to isolate one bird from another to avoid egg damage and aggressive behaviour during nesting time.

A pond that is deep enough to enable the ducks to dabble regularly is an advantage. If there is no pond, a water container large enough to enable ducks to immerse their heads and dabble is required.

Feeding:

Use commercial duck rations. If unavailable, domestic chicken feeds will suit. Geese consume 250 g-300 g per day when on commercial rations only, or less if they also graze on grass. Ducks require 120 g-150 g of mash or pellets per day.

These requirements vary with quality of diet, breed and physiological status of bird and environmental conditions. Check with the Department of Agriculture Primary Industries and Resources SA for correct diet regimen.

Demand feeding is preferred, but feed should be supplied at least twice per day (morning and evening). Do not force feed. Like domestic chickens, goslings and ducklings require high-protein foods. Geese appreciate a grassed, grazing area.

At all times, water must be cool, clean and fresh and of acceptable quality and sufficient quantity.

Disease prevention:

Disease control methods and internal and external parasite control programs should be developed in consultation with veterinarians or the Department of Agriculture. All activities must be documented in the appropriate records. Primary Industries and Resources SA or the Animal Disease Hotline 1800 675 888.

Breeding:

Handling:

Ducks and geese must be handled calmly and with care to prevent distress and injury to them.

Hygiene:

Signs of illness:

Bird health should be monitored at least daily and preferably more often. The first sign of ill-health may be noticed as a change in the birds' natural demeanour. They may be listless or lethargic and show signs of:

- inactivity, with head under wing, feathers ruffled or isolated from group;
- frequent shutting of eyes;
- little response when touched, pushed or pecked at by other birds;
- reduced feeding and/or water intake;
- lameness;
- reduced growth or egg production; or

AEC STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

- diarrhoea.

A failure to thrive or grow is another sign of illness.

Treatments:

If you are unable to identify and correct the cause of ill-health, assistance should be sought from veterinarians who are familiar with ducks or geese. Illnesses, injuries and treatment given must be documented in the appropriate records.

Euthanasia:

When an illness or injury is such that recovery is unlikely then the animal must be euthanased by a veterinarian. Any death must be reported to the Animal Ethics Committee using the appropriate form (see section relating to ADVERSE EVENTS). Forms are available on the relevant websites – see contact details below.

Disposal/fate planning:

A fate plan should be considered before using a duck or goose in any program. Birds that are no longer required must be re-homed. Ducks and geese must not be released into the wild.

Holiday and weekend care:

Ducks and Geese need to be monitored, checked daily and fed regularly over weekends and holiday periods. Care should be taken to more regularly check birds in sheds in times of extreme heat and cold. Be mindful that essential service failures such as power and water can have catastrophic affects in a very short time.

Approved activities:

Observation, breeding, farming

Resources:

Websites:

www.pir.sa.gov.au

www.agric.wa.gov.au