BY PACE FARM



DUCK EGG INCUBATION HANDBOOK

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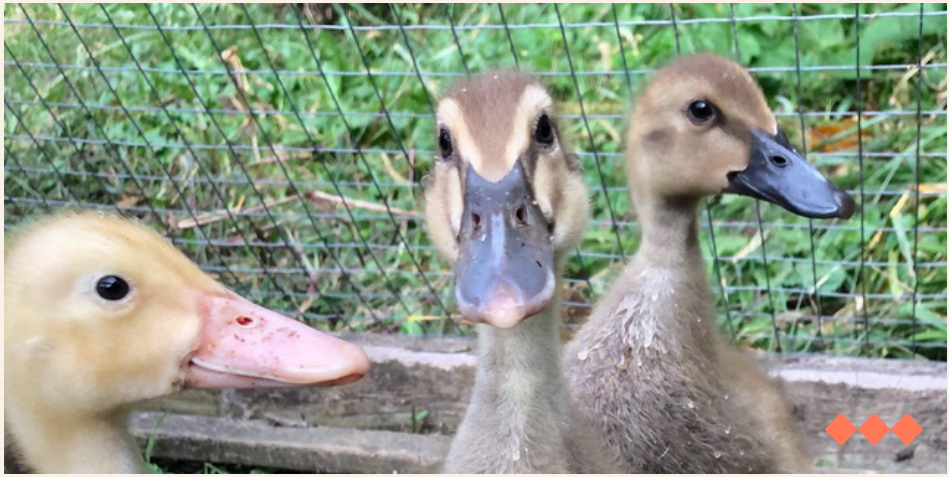
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GETTING STARTED

So! You'd like to hatch some adorable ducklings (who can blame you) but don't know where to start? Well, you've come to the right place! This handbook will help you in your journey. You will find everything from all the equipment you will need (and additional equipment you *may* need) as well as step-by-step instructions on how to incubate, with our recommendations, and some additional resources. Ready? Let's begin!



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

FERTILE EGGS

Your eggs need to be fertile, meaning that a drake (male duck) should have fertilized them. We recommend getting your eggs from a local farm where drakes and female ducks cohabitate.

The eggs should be fresh, preferably collected the same day you plan to begin your incubation. They should go into the incubator as soon as possible to increase your odds of a successful incubation.

Start with at least a dozen eggs. A high success rate is considered over 80% but, on average, the incubation rate is about 70%, meaning around 8 of your 12 eggs will hatch. We've heard of some success stories with a 100% hatch, but from our experience, and for a first-timer, don't be disappointed if your incubation is not textbook perfect.



AN INCUBATOR

AIR CIRCULATION. From our experience, the best hatching happens in incubators with air circulation.

EGG-TURNER. While some incubators have an egg-turner build-in, it's not a critical feature of an incubator. You can turn your eggs manually.

BRANDS. Look for reputable incubator brands. A Google search can help you here, as well as customer reviews. Don't skimp on your incubator!

TEMPERATURE. The ability to hold a constant temperature is the most important feature of a good incubator. Your incubator should be set to 100°F through the entire incubation process.



ELECTRICITY

Your incubator must be **plugged in at all times!** If there's a power outage (and this HAS happened to us), you need to make sure your incubator can still run.

Tip: A simple setup of a 100ah battery and a 500w inverter can solve the problem for around 20 hours.

FLASHLIGHT (OPTIONAL)

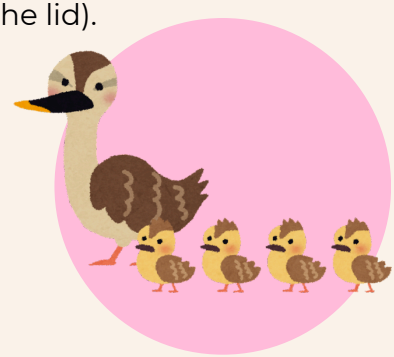
Some like to **candle** their eggs. This means, looking at the eggs with an incubator egg light to follow the growth process.

A BROODER

Once the ducklings hatch, this will be their home.
You can use a cage or coop with small gaps, such as a bird or a hamster cage, just note that the area around your cage or coop might get dirty and very smelly, as ducklings make a mess while splashing around. Alternatively, you can use a large plastic bin or container (without the lid).

A FEEDER

It should be big enough to serve all your ducklings, low enough for them to reach and small enough to fit in your cage.



A HEATING LAMP

We recommend using a **heating lamp**. You can use one that clips onto your container or you can set one up connected to a plank to hang over your cage.

BEDDING

You can use about an inch of **woodshavings** or **hay**.

FOOD

We **mill** our **grains**, which we get from a local speciality farm store. Don't mill too finely (it should be granular but not floury). The amount of grains depends on how many ducklings hatch. Our best recommendation is to keep your feeder full.

A PAINT TRAY

This will be their swimming pool.

AND... TIME

Never underestimate this important resource! We recommend to have a calendar on hand.



OUR EQUIPMENT



INCUBATOR

We've been using this brand for a few years and it has given us the best results so far..



HEATING LAMP & BASE

Ceramic heating lamps don't emit light, helping ducklings sleep. The one linked here is for outdoor use. For indoor use, you can get a 100W equivalent.



FEEDER

The exact model we have comes from a local farm animal store, but this is the closest to what we have.



INVERTER & BATTERY

In case of a power outage, we recommend a simple battery + inverter setup.

THE INCUBATION PROCESS

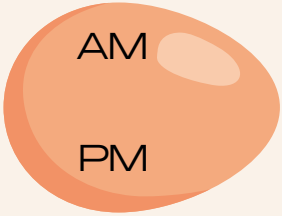
Duck incubation takes 28 days. The ideal time to start incubation is between March and July. Beginning too early may leave ducklings vulnerable to the cold, while starting too late could mean they are too young to handle the onset of winter.

STEP 1: HEATING UP YOUR INCUBATOR

Set the temperature of your incubator to 100°F. Your incubator should be fully warmed up before placing the eggs in it.

STEP 2: MARKING YOUR EGGS

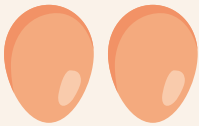
For an incubator **without a turner**, mark the eggs with a pencil horizontally (on their side). For example, you can write AM on one side and PM on the other.



If you have an incubator **with a turner**, you don't need to mark your eggs.

STEP 3: PLACING YOUR EGGS

For incubators with a turner. Place all your eggs with the pointy side down.



For incubators without a turner. Place your eggs horizontally (see above) making sure that they are all facing the same way (e.g. all the AMs are facing up).



STEP 4: ROTATING YOUR EGGS

For an incubator without a turner. You will need to rotate your eggs at least twice a day. In the morning, flip them so that all the AMs are facing up and in the evening, flip them so that all the PMs are facing up (a new definition of over easy, eh!).
We recommend to repeat the process at even intervals of time. For example, you can flip your eggs at 8 AM and then again at 8 PM.





“But I’m incubating in my classroom…”

It’s not the end of the world if the gap of time in between rotations is not equal. If you’re a teacher, for example, you can rotate your eggs when you arrive in your classroom, and once again before you leave for the day. You will need to come in to rotate the eggs on the weekend. Alternatively, you can get an incubator with an egg-turner.

“Oh no, I missed a rotation!”

Don’t panic. Rotate your egg in a way that they are placed between the two markings and on the next turn, continue as normal (e.g. if in the evening they’re all supposed to be PM, rotate them to be at the PM position).



STEP 5: SPRAYING YOUR EGGS

Duck eggs like to stay moist. You can spray your duck eggs daily during a rotation. Spray with unchlorinated water (e.g. rain water). Simply squirt twice into the incubator over the eggs.

STEP 6: COOLING THE EGGS

DAY 14. Turn off the incubator and let it cool down for 1 hour. When the hour is up, turn the incubator back on and proceed as usual, rotating your eggs twice per day (if using an incubator without a turner). The incubator should be closed while the cooling process is happening. It doesn't matter at which point during the day you do the cooldown.

DAY 25. Once again, turn off the incubator for 1 hour. Once the hour is up, turn the incubator back on. Just like on Day 14, the incubator should be closed while the cooling process is happening. At this point in the incubation process, stop rotating the eggs. For incubators with a turner, remove the turner from the incubator. You can stop spraying the eggs.

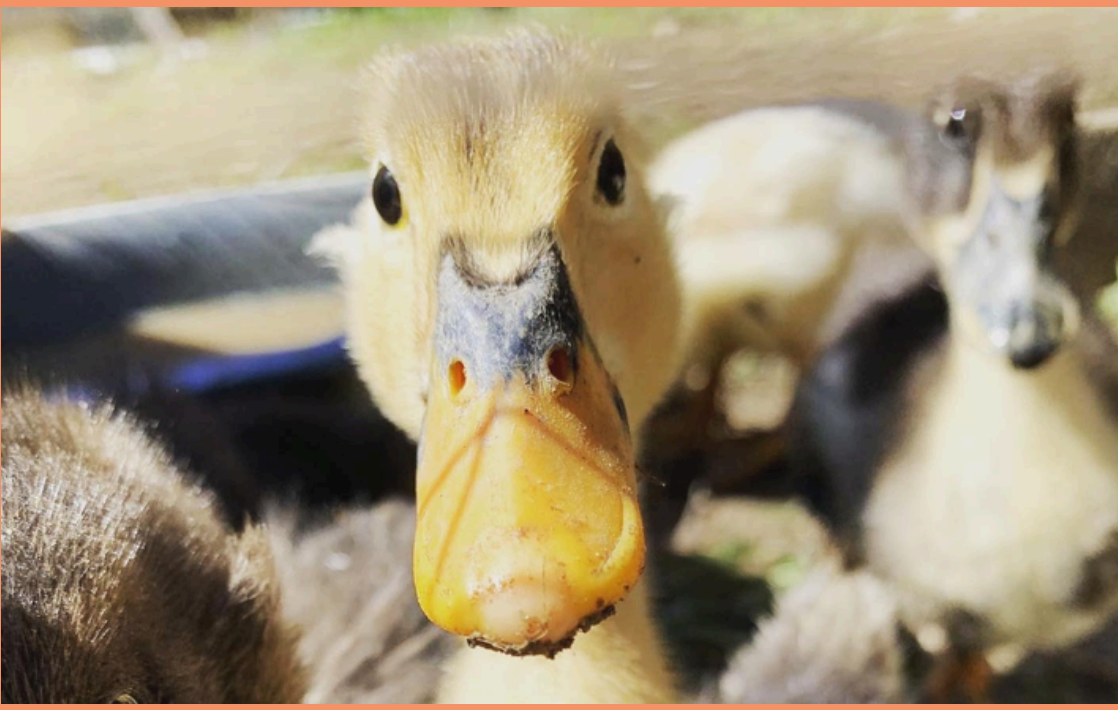
DAY 27. Add 1 cup of boiled water cooled to 100°F (or chlorine-free water) into a designated area in your incubator. If there's no designated area, pour the water into the bottom tray, beneath your eggs.



STEP 7: HATCHING

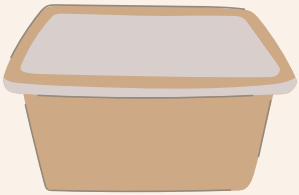
Day 28. This is when the magic begins to happen! On this day, you will witness the miracle of life as the eggs begin to hatch and little ducklings appear. It will be VERY tempting to open the incubator to take a peek, but you'll need to resist the urge for two more days.

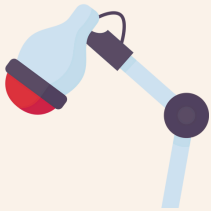
Wait two days after the first eggs hatch before opening the incubator, just to make sure that all possible eggs have hatched, and that the ducklings who did are drying. In the meantime, set up their home (next step).

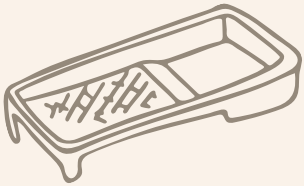


STEP 8: SETTING UP THE BROODER

While waiting for all your ducklings to hatch, it's time to set up their home! Place the woodchips/hay evenly in your brooder, then set up your heating lamp, fill the paint tray (deep end) with water, pour milled grains into the feeder, and place everything inside your brooder.







YOU DID IT!

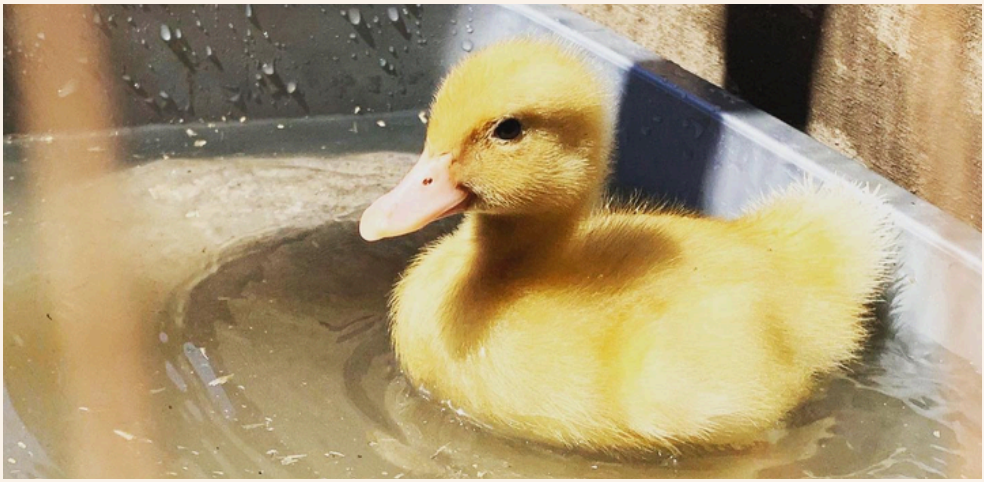


You have (hopefully) successfully hatched your first ducklings! You can now open the incubator, pick up a little one and say hello. Be gentle when handling them, don't squeeze too tight. Take a few moments to celebrate. You've earned it.



STEP 9: REHOMING YOUR DUCKLINGS

It's now time to move the ducklings to their home. Gently, take one at a time and place it in your brooder. Observe them for a little while to make sure they know how to hide under the lamp, swim in the tray, and access their food. Change the water daily, replenish the food as needed, and check occasionally that the heating lamp is warm by placing your hand under it. It's important for your space to be well-lit during the day.



When your ducklings are 1-2 weeks old, you can relocate them to an outdoor coop. Make sure your coop is fully meshed to avoid your little ones becoming snacks for your local predators. At 2-3 weeks, you can upgrade their paint tray pool to a litter box. Make sure that the ducklings can get in and out of the pool.

Tip: You can create a "staircase" using rocks.



CHECKLIST

EQUIPMENT

- ☐ Eggs
- ☐ Incubator
- ☐ Heating lamp
- ☐ Feeder
- ☐ Woodchips/hay
- ☐ Paint tray
- ☐ Spray bottle with unchlorinated water
- ☐ Coop (large plastic bin)
- ☐ Food (milled grains)

Optional:

- ☐ Pencil (to mark your eggs)
- ☐ Egg light
- ☐ Battery
- ☐ Inverter

INCUBATION

- ☐ Heat your incubator to 100F
- ☐ Mark your eggs
- ☐ Place your eggs in the incubator
- ☐ Rotate your eggs twice daily
- ☐ Spray your eggs once daily
- ☐ Cool down on day 17 and day 25
- ☐ Stop rotating after day 25
- ☐ Add 1 cup of water on day 27
- ☐ Wait for 2 days after first hatch
- ☐ Setup your brooder
- ☐ Relocate your ducklings
- ☐ Celebrate





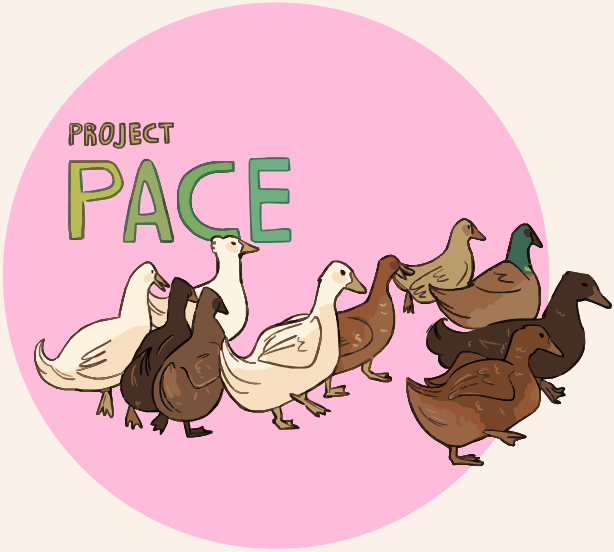
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WHERE WE SHOP

Meunerie Deux-Montagnes for all of our feed needs
Canadian Tire for various equipment needs (e.g. battery, inverter)
Dollarama or any home hardware store (for your paint tray)
Amazon (links to products in the “Our Equipment” section)

VIDEOS

Newly hatched ducklings
A bunch of cute baby ducklings
Turning our home into a maternity ward



PROJECT PACE.CA

1450 montee wilson
ile-bizard, qc
h9e 1k3 canada

Questions? Send us an
email: info@projectpace.ca