

Preventing duck diseases

Useful tips in preventing duck diseases

Selection of healthy stock

Purchase stock from a reliable source or hatchery. Raise only healthy stock. Sick birds should be culled immediately, and disposed of properly to avoid the spread of infection.

Good feeding and water supply

- ❑ Feed ducks with balanced rations. Ducks fed with unbalanced rations are vulnerable to diseases.
- ❑ Provide cool, fresh and clean drinking water at all times. Highly polluted water is detrimental to the ducks' health and can affect overall performance. Clean the water containers at least once a day.

- ❑ Make sure that feeding troughs are kept clean and dry at all times. Wet feed troughs may become contaminated with yeasts, harmful bacteria and harmful molds which are a source of mycotoxins. Since ducks are highly susceptible to aflatoxicosis, great care must be taken over feeding troughs.

Good sanitation

- ❑ Ducks of the same age should be kept in the same pen, and provided with the same medication.
- ❑ The farm and its surroundings should be kept clean. Ducks should be provided with clean, dry litter and well-drained areas.
- ❑ The bodies of dead ducks should be burnt or buried as soon as possible, so that flies do not breed on the decomposing bodies.



Fig. 1. Free-range ducks

Minimize stress

- ❑ There should be well-ventilated housing with a dry floor or litter. Do not overstock.
- ❑ Houses where ducks spend the night must be protected from dogs, cats, rats and other possible disease vectors.
- ❑ Farmers should minimize activities that cause stress to the ducks and thus lower their production.

Protect duck farm against entry of pathogens

- ❑ Delivery trucks and visitors should not be allowed to enter the production area, since they may introduce disease organisms onto the farm.
- ❑ Footbaths should be installed at strategic locations, to prevent the entry of infective agents onto the farm.

Vaccinations and supplements

- ❑ The ducks should be vaccinated against duck cholera, using a polyvalent bacterin if this is available.

- ❑ An antibiotic-vitamin-mineral supplement should be given to suppress a build-up of bacterial infection and improve the ducks' health.
- ❑ The ducks should be sprayed with insecticide at least once a year to control lice, mites, beetles and other arthropods that may infest and annoy them.

Other health concerns

- ❑ The ducks should not be fed decomposed food such as dead snails, shrimps, fish or spoiled meat, any of which may contain virulent micro-organisms or their toxins.
- ❑ Any rice fed to the ducks must be free of insecticides, since these can have an adverse effect on the health and production of the ducks.
- ❑ Farmers should keep good records of production and health status.
- ❑ They should supervise closely the overall duck farm operations.
- ❑ New stock should not be added to an existing flock. Newly arrived ducks should be quarantined for at least two weeks. Outbreaks of disease may otherwise occur if sick or carrier ducks are allowed to mix with the flock.



Fig. 2. Intensive duck raising, Taiwan