

DUCKS

Due to cross breeding there are many different breeds of ducks but are generally divided into two different types; Mallards and Muscovy/Barbary.

The Pekin duck which is from the Mallard breed is the most commonly farmed duck in the UK and originates from China.

Pekin ducks are mainly farmed in the UK for meat, eggs and feathers. Muscovy/Barbary are commonly used for the extremely cruel production of Foie Gras, particularly the males because their livers are twice the size of the female.

Farmed ducks are often white all over with an orange beak and webbed feet. The webbed feet which are evolved for swimming, enables ducks to spend much of their time in the water. They use the water to clean the dirt and dust off their feathers and use their beaks to obtain insects, seeds, fruit and plants to eat. They are active animals, that will fly great distances for migratory purposes and wingspan can reach a length of 1.5m. In the wild you will often see a male and female together with their offspring, both social and maternal animals.

It is estimated that over 14 million ducks are reared for meat in the UK each year, most of which are intensively bred and farmed in poor living conditions.

Currently in the UK/EU there are no legislations in place to govern the way ducks are cared for, meaning the industry is largely free to set their own standards. Ducks farmed for meat are almost always intensively reared indoors with reports of up to 10,000 birds per shed. The space is extremely cramped, with the average count of four ducks per square meter. They have artificial or little lighting to prevent other birds entering and the potential spread of bird flu, Their only access to water is drinking water. They are kept on straw bedding, which becomes contaminated with urine very quickly and can result in ulcers and burns to the ducks' feet.

Farmed ducks are unable to display any natural behaviours such as swimming, foraging or flying often resulting in physical and psychological problems.



Rescued duck at Dean Farm Trust

They are fed special formulated high protein diets to ensure weight gain is fast and they have very little activity due to lack of space. The fast growth commonly causes leg problems such as spraddle leg (tendons bend in the opposite direction), lameness, stunted bone growth and leg breakages.

Feather plucking and pecking can also occur due to lack of stimulation and space therefore some breeds of birds may have their beaks trimmed. This is illegal in the UK but cases can still occur.

Due to their fast growth rate, ducks can reach their 'ideal slaughter weight' at just six to seven weeks of age. Despite the fact their potential lifespan is 15-20 years old.

At just under two months old, thousands of ducks are rounded up and placed in transport crates where they are taken to the abattoir for slaughter. Those who survive the long, overcrowded journey are hung upside-down, their feet locked in shackles whilst still alive and their throats slit. The birds are then dunked into scalding hot water for the defeathering process and in some reported cases, birds have still been alive during this.

Dean Farm Trust promotes compassionate living

