



Species Specifics of Brooding, Rearing and Breeding of Game Birds

Pheasants

There are many types of pheasants, with the Ringneck being the most commonly raised in North America. These pheasants are bred both for meat and for release, and are easier to raise than many other game birds.

Brooding and Rearing – Cannibalism may be a problem in confinement reared pheasants. Peepers may be used on young pheasants to reduce pecking and, thus, mortality.

Breeding – Ringneck pheasants do well in colony pens with 10 to 12 hens per male. A good hen should produce 45 to 60 eggs per season. Fertility of 80% - 90% of total eggs is achievable with 70% - 80% hatchability of total set eggs. Ringneck eggs normally take 24 days to hatch.

Quail

The Bobwhite and the Coturnix are the most frequently raised species of quail. The Coturnix is used primarily for research, eggs and meat. It is not good for hunting. The Bobwhite is an excellent game bird commonly propagated for release.

Brooding and Rearing – Cannibalism and disease, especially ulcerative enteritis, are the two major problems in raising quail. Raising the birds on wire with good sanitation will help minimize ulcerative enteritis. The addition of 200 g of BMD per ton of feed will help prevent ulcerative enteritis. Cannibalism is best controlled by beak trimming.

Breeding – Best performance is obtained with pairs. However, with colony pens, a ratio of two females for every male can be used. A good hen should produce 50 to 100 eggs per season. This number can be increased using artificial lights. Bobwhites have a 23 to 24 day incubation period.

Chukar

Chukar are a type of partridge which, like the Ringneck pheasant, have been released in North America and have established themselves in the wild. It is best to keep Chukar on wire because they are highly susceptible to blackhead and other diseases. In the wild, Chukar are flighty and nervous, but in captivity they tend to tame down. If they are being raised for release, keep them isolated to avoid taming them down.

Brooding and Rearing – Chukar are fairly easy to raise on wire. Maintaining a low light intensity and providing some greens such as lettuce will give the bird something to pick at and will help prevent cannibalism. If, however, cannibalism does become a problem, beak-trim all birds and remove the injured.

Breeding – Chukar produce well when pair mated, or in colonies with 100 males to 400 females. A hen should lay 40 to 60 eggs per season. The incubation period for Chukar is 23 to 25 days. Fertility of 80% - 90% of total eggs set is possible. Beak trimming the males and providing adequate space helps prevent scalping the females.

Ducks

Ducks are hardy animals resistant to many common poultry diseases. The most commonly raised breeds are Mallards for release, and White Pekin and Muscovy for meat. Mallards can be raised successfully the same as pheasants. However, the faster growing White Pekin and Muscovy need a duck feeding program in order to economically reach their genetic potential. Producers should be aware there are many genetic varieties in duck body weight potential.

Brooding and Rearing – It is important that ducklings have an adequate supply of clean, fresh water at all times. Growing and finishing feeds should be pelleted to minimize waste. Starter feed can be mash, but crumbled feeds offer less waste. Ducks have a much healthier beginning and lower mortality if started on high-quality crumbles, especially in intensive production conditions.

Breeding – An ideal male:female ratio for breeding ducks is one drake for every 4 or 5 hens. For good fertility, stimulate the drakes with light about 2 weeks before stimulating the hens. The incubation period is 28 days for all ducks except Muscovy, which has a 35-day period.

Geese

Geese are hardy, resistant to many common poultry diseases and are good grazers. The Emden is most commonly raised for meat, while other breeds are raised for ornamental or exhibition purposes. Geese are fast growers and grow best when they have access to pasture.

Brooding and Rearing – Goslings must have an adequate supply of clean, fresh water at all times. Feed should be pelleted to avoid waste. Crumbles should be used for starter feeds, especially in intensive production conditions. Provide adequate shelter when pasturing goslings. Young goslings are easily chilled by heavy rains, but are otherwise very healthy.

Breeding – Geese are not as prolific as ducks, laying only 30 to 40 eggs per season. Fertility is usually best with only one or two hens per gander, although up to five hens per gander are sometimes used. More and larger eggs are usually produced the second year, but fertility is slightly decreased. Geese eggs require 28 to 30 days to hatch.

Wild Turkeys

Modern wildlife management techniques have increased the wild turkey population in North America. They are easily raised in captivity, but quickly tame down. Thus, the biggest challenge in raising them for release is to imprint them with the wild habitat and adult turkeys, while preventing them from imprinting with humans.

Brooding and Rearing – If turkeys are floor brooded, they may require blackhead prevention drugs, depending on the conditions of the area. Medication should be considered for prevention of coccidiosis.

Breeding – Wild turkeys can be flock mated with one tom for each 4 to 8 hens. Turkey eggs have a 28-day incubation period.