



DUCKLING CARE

Its Duckling season again so just a quick refresher on what to do when we have them come into the clinic and what advice to give to clients.

1. When members of the public ring because they have found a clutch of ducklings. Generally the easiest thing to do is just bring them straight into us if the mother is dead or not in the vicinity anywhere. Problems arise when they ring to say the mother and ducklings are on their pool or trying to cross the freeway because catching all of them is hazardous and frustrating. Catching the ducklings and hoping the mother will follow is probably the best option.

2. Ducks in hospital do not need water to swim in as long as they have an adequate supply of drinking water. They either have to eat wet food or drink as they eat. (Give water from the water filter as this takes out the chlorine. Not a bad idea with all wildlife).

- A large duck can sit happily in a hospital kennel.
- Black ducks are insectivores.
- Wood Ducks which are herbivores.
- However shredded lettuce can be fed to both as a stop gap or chicken pellets
- A large plastic container or a good strong deep cardboard box works well.

3. The goal with ducklings is that they are raised for release into the wild. The main obstacle is that they imprint very quickly. They should not be handled any more than is absolutely necessary. Ducklings should be put into an area that they cannot escape from. Remember they can jump very high for their size. Again a large plastic container or a good strong deep cardboard box works well. Lots of newspaper on the bottom. They do need warmth, either a lamp or hot water bottle as they are probably not heavy enough to warm a heat pad.

- They naturally hide under the wings of their parents so something to make them feel secure should be provided. Cuddly toy, feather duster, something they can huddle under.
- Only ever give a water container just large enough to drink from but not large enough to swim. They have no waterproofing on their feathers, the become saturated and they will die from hypothermia.
- If you put them in a hospital kennel remember to block off the bottom half of the rungs to they cannot escape
- Ducklings need to drink within the first hour of coming into hospital, and getting them to feed soon after is vital.
- A supply of chick starter should always be kept in hospital and bought fresh each season. (Duck starter is for fattening birds for the table!)
- Sprinkle on the floor of the box and tap the bottom of the box with index finger imitating the noise a mother duck's beak will make.
- They will follow your finger tip and eventually start pecking. Lettuce can be shredded very small and floated on water.