

Guidelines for Producers of Small Quantities of Duck Eggs (Backyard Flocks)

This leaflet outlines a summary of requirements for producers supplying small quantities of duck eggs, primarily for own use. Where eggs are sold into retail premises please refer to section “Producer Code of Practice”.

Registration

All flocks, including backyard flocks, must be registered with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Application forms can be accessed on www.agriculture.gov.ie (Information for the Poultry Industry). Completed forms should be returned to the local District Veterinary Office.

Hygiene Requirements

Duck egg producers are subject to the general hygiene requirements of National and European legislation which includes requirements such as proper hygiene during egg production, storage and transport. Maintaining good standards of hygiene is very important as duck eggs are known to be capable of transmitting salmonella infection. Clean eggs are essential. In order to produce clean eggs, nest boxes should be provided. Litter in the nestbox and on the floor of the building should be kept clean and regularly renewed. Clean drinking water should be provided with drinkers placed over a drainage area to prevent spoilage of litter.

Washing of duck eggs is not recommended. Washing eggs can damage the invisible natural antibacterial coating on the egg shell which may in-turn increase the risk of penetration of the egg by salmonella bacteria.

Proper pest control, feeding programmes, bird welfare and record keeping are also key requirements. The producer is responsible for the safety of the product being marketed.

Record Keeping:

The owner or person in charge of poultry must maintain, on a daily basis, a record of—

(a) all mortalities that occur in the flock or on the premises,

(b) the daily production of eggs in the flock,

(c) the intake of food and water by the flock,

(d) details of egg sales (purchaser, quantity, date).

- (b) and (c) does not apply to a person who keeps no more than 350 poultry and does not sell eggs.
- Records must be maintained for 1 year.
- The person in charge of poultry must immediately notify the veterinary practitioner having clinical charge of the poultry if there are increased mortalities or a drop in egg production in or a decrease in feed or water intake

Biosecurity

Biosecurity is the term used for all measures that may be taken to prevent the introduction or spread of disease into a flock. The site should be clearly secured at all times to prevent any entry of unauthorised personnel or vehicles. The perimeter of the site ought to be clearly identified and, if possible, fenced.

The site must be kept clean and tidy to discourage wild birds, rodents and flies. Vegetation should be kept under control to minimise rodent cover and wild birds. The area around where the ducks are kept should be free of debris, equipment etc., since these can be a source of attraction for vermin. Pets (such as cats and dogs) and other farm animals should be excluded from the area.

Salmonella can spread from ducks to other poultry species, animals and humans.

Biosecurity measures to be considered include —

(a) perimeter fencing around the premises,

- (b) securing the premises where the poultry are kept,
- (c) separation of species of poultry from other species,
- (d) provision and use of footbaths and hand-washing facilities,
- (e) controls on animals, visitors and vehicles to the premises,
- (f) disinfection of premises, vehicles and equipment,
- (g) wearing of protective clothing and footwear,
- (h) adequate arrangements for feeding and watering of free-range poultry,
- (i) adequate storage, treatment of or access to water,
- (j) proper storage and disposal of dead birds, litter, manure and waste material,
- (k) proper storage of feed, water or bedding,
- (l) good management practices.

Sourcing Ducks

All ducks should be sourced from premises that are free from *Salmonella Typhimurium* and *Salmonella Enteritidis*. A declaration from either the operator or veterinary certification that this is the case should be sought.

Production Code of Practice

DAFF has produced a **code of practice for producers of duck eggs intended for sale in retail premises**. This includes sourcing of flocks from a registered operator, implementing a salmonella

monitoring programme and stamping of eggs with a producer code to provide traceability. Further information is available on <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie>.

Legislation

DAFF is currently in the process of producing national legislation controlling duck eggs.

Safe Usage of duck eggs

The FSAI advice for the safe usage of duck eggs is as follows:

- Duck eggs should not be eaten raw
- Only eat duck eggs that have been thoroughly cooked, until both the white and yolk are solid
- If you are preparing a dish that contains duck eggs, ensure that you have cooked it thoroughly before eating it
- Do not use raw duck eggs in the preparation of products that contain raw or lightly cooked egg, such as homemade mayonnaise, tiramisu, icing, hollandaise sauce
- When using duck eggs in cooking or baking, do not eat or taste the raw mix
- After handling raw duck eggs, always wash hands thoroughly
- Ensure all utensils and preparation surfaces that have been in contact with raw duck eggs are washed thoroughly before being re-used
- Store duck eggs in the fridge away from ready-to-eat foods

Useful Links and further information:

<http://www.fsai.ie>

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie>