



## DUCKS



# ORIGIN OF THE DUCK



- ▶ Nearly all breeds of ducks can trace their origins to the wild Mallard, *Anas Platyrhynchos*.
- ▶ No one knows for certain when Mallards were first domesticated, but there is some evidence to suggest that the Egyptians used ducks in religious ceremonies ca. 1353-1336 B.C) and possibly also bred them for food.
- ▶ The Southeast Asians were also raising ducks in captivity prior to 500 B.C.
- ▶ Until the 19th century, ducks were kept mostly for eating rather than their wonderful eggs.
- ▶ There is only one duck which isn't a descendant of the Mallard. The Muscovy which is a large, heavy duck.
- ▶ The Muscovy originated from Central and South America.
- ▶ The Spanish Conquistadors brought the Muscovy back from the Amazon in the 16th century. There are still populations of wild Muscovy living in the Amazon today.
- ▶ Wild ducks are excellent fliers and have traditionally been hunted for sport and for eating.





# THE WILD MALLARD



- ▶ This species is the main ancestor of most breeds of domesticated ducks.
- ▶ Mallards live in wetlands, eat water plants and small animals.
- ▶ They are social animals preferring to group or flock together.
- ▶ The Mallard is a dabbling duck that breeds throughout the temperate and subtropical Americas, Euro Siberia, and North Africa.
- ▶ It has been introduced to many countries including New Zealand and Australia.
- ▶ The male birds (drakes) have a glossy green head and are grey on their wings and belly
- ▶ The females (hens or ducks) have mainly brown-speckled feathers.



# AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY

- ▶ The duck meat industry in Australia is relatively new, with significant expansion occurring in the 1970s and 80s.
- ▶ In Australia, 95% of meat ducks produced will be consumed domestically.
- ▶ The main domestic market for whole ducks is the Asian restaurant trade, however, duck meat consumption is rising in Australia with an increasing demand for specialty cuts from restaurants and supermarkets.
- ▶ The duck egg industry is very small with mostly small operators producing for specialist outlets.
- ▶ The main breeds for meat production in Australia are Muscovy, Aylesbury, Pekin and Rouen. Most ducks produced commercially for meat in Australia are Pekin/Aylesbury crosses.







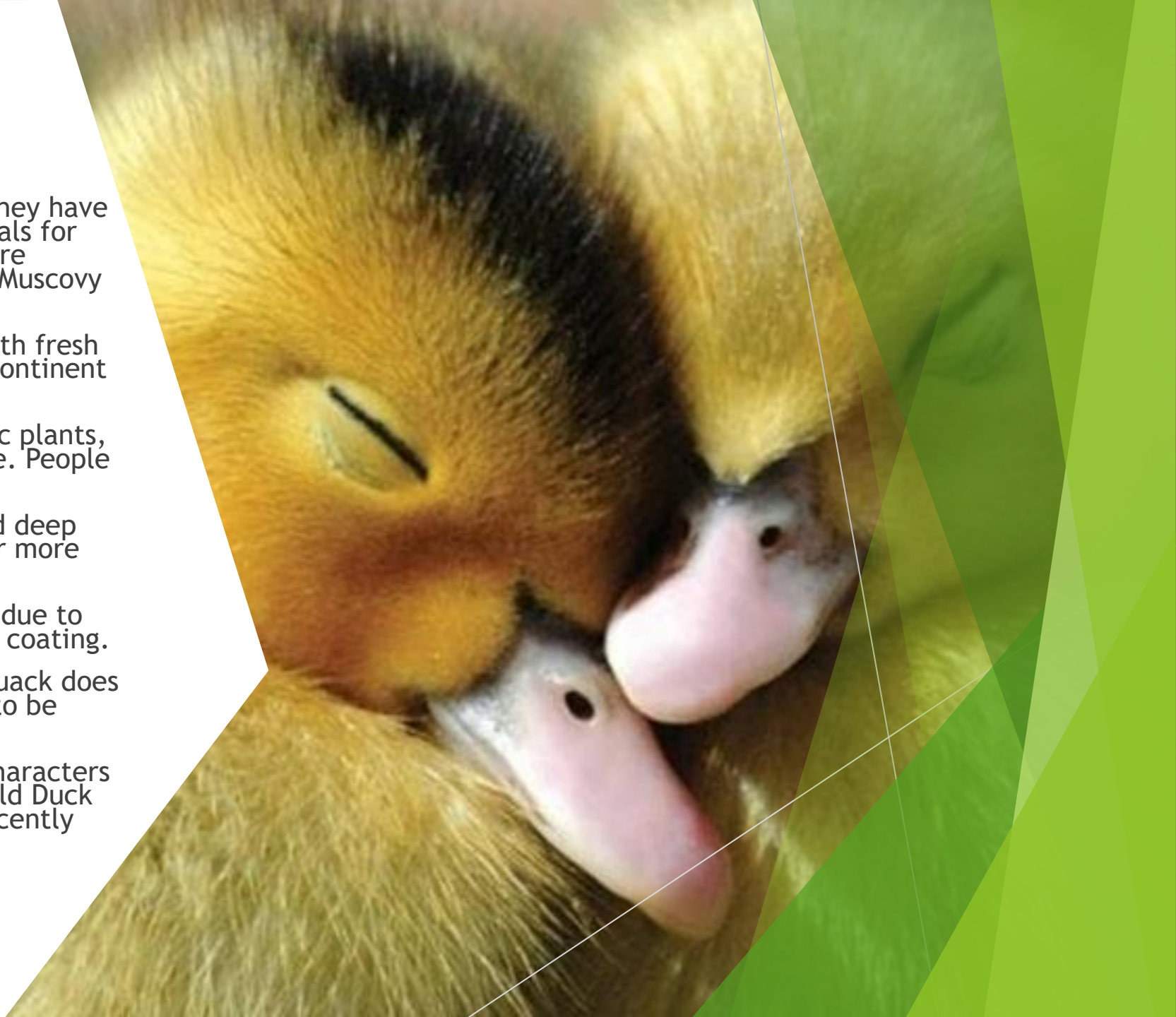
## DUCK TERMINOLOGY

- ▶ A baby duck is called a duckling
- ▶ An adult male is a drake.
- ▶ An adult female duck is called a hen or a duck
- ▶ A group of ducks can be called a raft, team, or paddling.
- ▶ Generic terms like bird, chick, and flock also apply to ducks.
- ▶ Ducks are precocial, which means that ducklings are covered with down. They can walk and leave the nest just a few hours after hatching.
- ▶ This helps protect the young chicks from predators, since they do not need to stay in the vulnerable nest area for long.
- ▶ Eggs from common ducks like Pekins require 28 days to hatch. Eggs from Muscovy ducks hatch in about 35 days



# SOME FUN FACTS ABOUT DUCKS

- ▶ Ducks are curious and friendly creatures they have been domesticated as pets and farm animals for more than 500 years. All domestic ducks are descended from either the Mallard or the Muscovy duck.
- ▶ Ducks are mostly aquatic birds living in both fresh water and sea water and found on every continent except for Antarctica.
- ▶ Ducks are omnivores. They feed on aquatic plants, small fish, insects, worms, grubs and more. People often feed domesticated ducks' bread.
- ▶ Diving ducks and sea ducks search for food deep underwater. To be able to stay underwater more easily, diving ducks are quite heavy.
- ▶ All ducks have highly waterproof feathers due to the feathers interlocking nature and waxy coating.
- ▶ A common urban legend is that a duck's quack does not echo. This has however, been proven to be false.
- ▶ Ducks have featured as popular cartoon characters over the years, such as Walt Disney's Donald Duck and Warner Brothers, Daffy Duck. More recently Wonder Pets Ming Ming.







# KEEPING PET DUCKS

- ▶ Ducks are becoming more and more popular because they are so versatile. They lay delicious eggs, eat kitchen scraps, consume garden pests and are generally good pets.
- ▶ They are naturally very resistant to disease and don't require much looking after either.
- ▶ Although ducks make terrific backyard pets, it is important to consider a few factors before making a commitment to keeping them. Many people find the quacking of ducks pleasant, but close neighbours may feel differently, especially if ducks start their quacking very early in the morning. There are some breeds that are calmer than others and won't make too much noise unless frightened or disturbed.
- ▶ Putting a few ducks in the backyard is a good method of controlling slugs, snails and insects however if not managed well, they can do more harm to the garden than good.
- ▶ Don't let ducks into an area until the crops are well established and past the seedling stage and be sure to keep them well away from lettuce, spinach, cabbage, green beans, berries and fruit.
- ▶ Duck's love nothing better than drilling into wet soil and damaging roots with their beaks, keep them away from the garden when watering or if the soil is wet.
- ▶ Ducks need to be kept in a secure pen or house when you are not at home that will protect them from predators.
- ▶ at least 1.5 sq. metres area per duck in their house or pen if they are to be confined in it during the day. For a night house provide at a minimum, at least 0.5 sq. metres per duck.
- ▶ Check with your local Council for the duck keeping regulations within your area.





## HEALTH CARE, PESTS & DISEASES

- ▶ Animal health, welfare and biosecurity are all important stages of the livestock production chain. If managed poorly each can have adverse impacts on productivity.
- ▶ Biosecurity programs for farming industries are designed to prevent the spread of infectious disease and contain disease outbreaks when they occur.
- ▶ Parasites and disease impact on all livestock production systems, including ducks. Livestock affected by disease may not always show obvious clinical signs but there may still be negative impacts on growth and reproduction rates.
- ▶ Biosecurity is important at the national, regional and property level.
- ▶ Producers are governed by Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines. State and territory governments are responsible for animal welfare laws and their enforcement. These are enforced through animal welfare or prevention of cruelty to animals' legislation.





# RISKS & CHALLENGES

- ▶ Like any primary production enterprise there are risks associated with commercial production of Ducks. Some will be outside of a producer's control however experienced producers are usually able to manage these risks.
- ▶ Risks include the loss of vital export markets. The COVID-19 outbreak had a massive impact on a lot of our export markets.
- ▶ Disease and pests, it is extremely important that we maintain Australia's freedom from major diseases through strict quarantine laws and procedures.
- ▶ Here in Australian weather events such as drought, fires and flooding take a huge toll on our farming communities. They really need our support.



# POP QUIZ

- ▶ The male is called a \_\_\_\_\_ and the female is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
- ▶ A baby duck is called a \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Duck eggs incubation period last for \_\_\_\_\_.
- ▶ A duck's average natural lifespan is \_\_\_\_\_ years.
- ▶ Duck production has been widely established in Australia's for over 100 years TRUE/FALSE
- ▶ All domestic ducks originally come from what wild breed \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ What are three challenges farmers face in Australia

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

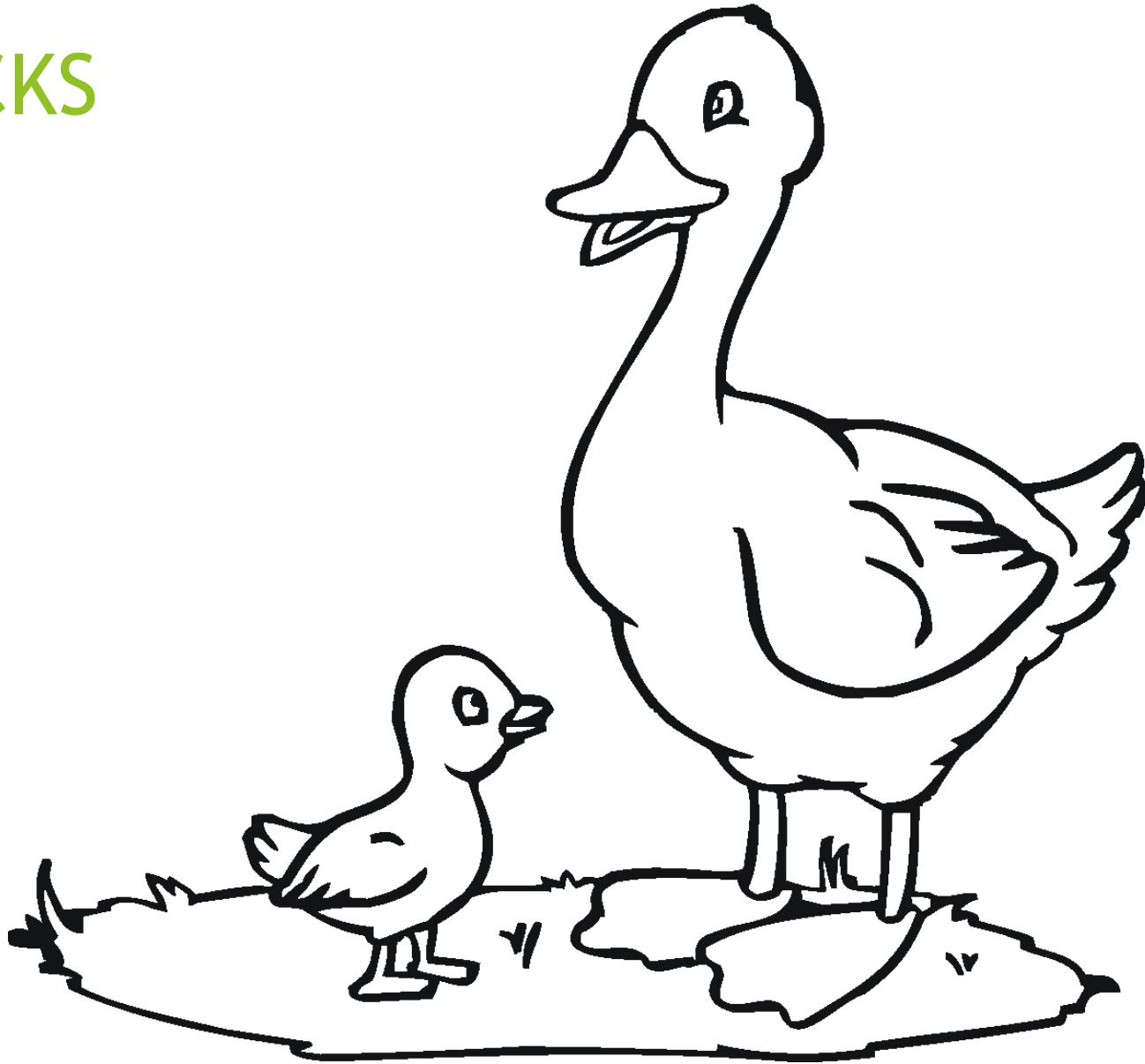




# NOTES

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# DUCKS







## RESOURCES

[www.betterpetsandgardens.com.au](http://www.betterpetsandgardens.com.au)

[www.agrifutures.com.au](http://www.agrifutures.com.au)

<https://kb.rspca.org.au>

Wikipedia