

Nutritional Management of Geese

D. Ffoulkes, Animal Production Officer, Darwin

GENERAL

The nutrition of geese is essentially the same as for other poultry. However they are the fastest growing and most efficient of all poultry, particularly the young goslings, and therefore the young birds require high levels of protein in their diet. Hatchlings can go without food for up to 36 hours but given access to good quality herbage will begin grazing before this time. In addition they should be provided with a crumbled or pelleted starter ration, to appetite, up to 3-4 weeks of age. Thereafter, goslings may be fed on restricted amounts of a finisher ration as a supplement to grazing, the quantity of supplement given being dependant on pasture availability and desired level of production.

Caged goslings that are completely raised on a well-balanced ration grow much faster than their free-ranging counterparts, weighing some 20% more at 10 weeks of age.

Clean water should of course be available at all times, allowing sufficient depth so that birds can submerge their heads to clear their nostrils, but are prevented from entering the water and swimming until after 2 weeks old.



1-4 WEEKS

Commercial chick starter rations that contain 20% protein and a vitamin/mineral premix provide adequate nutrition for free-range and caged goslings up to one month of age. The availability of fine shell grit or sand is also recommended.

Intensively reared birds without access to pasture may develop vices such as nibbling each other's down. This can be alleviated by providing some green feed, for example cabbage, lettuce or fresh lawn clippings, or by hanging strips of strong cloth for them to 'play' with. At 4 weeks old the goslings weight from 1.5-2.0 kg.

5-12 WEEKS

Commercial grower rations (15% protein) for pullets can be used for the month old goslings. Even where good grazing is available, supplementary feeding is necessary but can be restricted to 0.5 kg/head/week until 8 weeks of age, increasing to 1 kg/head/week thereafter until 12 weeks of age.

Caged birds are given free access to complete rations, supplemented with shell grit and if possible some green forage. Their liveweight increases from 3.5 to 4.0 kg at 8 weeks to over 5 kg at 12 weeks.

12 WEEKS ONWARDS

Intensively reared birds are usually slaughtered at 12-16 weeks old when the liveweight is 6 kg or more. During this period, grains such as maize, sorghum or rice may be given on a free-choice basis in conjunction with the complete ration. Geese on the range at this stage can be finished with unrestricted access to complete rations.

BREEDERS

Breeding stock and adult geese kept as 'watch dogs' will generally thrive on good quality pasture. However if the grass is of poor quality or of limited availability then supplements of grain, ideally fed twice a day, may be necessary. Six weeks before the breeding season they should be supplemented with a commercial laying hen ration at a rate of 180 g/head/day.

Examples of ration formulations for geese are shown below. As previously mentioned most commercial feeds for domestic fowls (i.e. starter, grower, layer) are also suitable for the appropriate stage of growth of geese.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Bacon, M.E. (1979) The care and management of geese. WA Dept of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 3769.

Nowland, W.J. (1984) Geese raising. Dept of Agriculture, NSW. Agfact A5.0.2.

Patrick, H. and Scharble, P.J. (1980). Poultry: Feeds and Nutrition. Westport, Connecticut: AVI Publishing Company Inc.

Staples, K. And Woolford, R. (1981) Keeping geese. Dept of Agriculture, SA. Fact Sheet No. 12/81.

Table 1. Ration formulations of supplement and complete feeds for goslings and breeders (all ingredients available in the Northern Territory)

Ingredients	Starter Ration (1-4 weeks)	Grower/Finisher (4 weeks-market)	Breeder Ration
Wheat (millrun)	20	10.5	10
Sorghum meal*	55	58	49
Whole rice (ground)*	-	14	17
Soybean meal (full fat)	5	2.5	4.5
Sunflower meal	5	-	5
Meatmeal	15	15	9.5
Limestone	-	-	5

*Maize (ground) may substitute for sorghum or whole rice.

All Rations - add salt (2.5 g per kg of feed) and Vitamin/trace mineral premix (as per manufacturer's recommendations).

Please visit us on our website at www.primaryindustry.nt.gov.au

While all care has been taken to ensure that information contained in this Agnote is true and correct at the time of publication, the Northern Territory of Australia gives no warranty or assurance, and makes no representation as to the accuracy of any information or advice contained in this publication, or that it is suitable for your intended use. No serious, business or investment decisions should be made in reliance on this information without obtaining independent/or professional advice in relation to your particular situation.