



Photo by Becky Matsubara

## WATERFOWL FOSTERING INSTRUCTIONS

Avian influenza can potentially infect people, which is why it is safest not to intervene if you see orphaned or injured ducks and geese. However, you can give abandoned and orphaned ducklings and goslings a chance to grow up by attempting to foster orphaned ducklings and geese. If you choose to try fostering, it is very important to be aware of the risk from Avian Influenza and take steps to protect yourself from the illness, specifically:

- DO NOT capture/handle wild waterfowl if you have a domestic flock at home or are immunocompromised
- DO wear gloves when handling a waterfowl or items that touch the bird (eg. towels)
- DO wash your hands after touching any wild birds or items they have touched/used
- DO NOT allow children or pets to interact with wild birds or items they have touched/used
- Minimize contact with wild birds. DO NOT hold, cuddle, or pet them. When possible, avoid handling the birds at all – for example, to release, gently tip the box until they can climb out rather than picking them up

It's also important to know that there is risk involved with the fostering process, which is why we historically have only had trained individuals attempt it. Even if you do everything right, sometimes fostering does not work out, and – especially if the mother/siblings show aggression – sometimes ducklings/goslings can be killed. But because Avian Influenza puts other birds and people in danger, care options for ducklings and goslings are limited to humane euthanasia. We provide this guide in hopes of saving as many ducklings and goslings as possible in the current situation. To increase the chances of a successful foster, please:

- DO attempt fostering as soon as possible; the longer animals are in your possession the greater your personal risk and the lower the chances of a successful foster
- DO NOT handle or speak around babies more than absolutely necessary
- DO NOT attempt to hatch eggs
- DO NOT attempt to foster ill or injured ducklings/goslings

# HOW TO FOSTER

## Step 1. Temporarily contain the duckling/gosling

- Ducklings can jump very well! Keep the container closed securely so they do not escape
- Make sure the container is not airtight! Poke some holes if you need to.
- Line the container with a towel or old t-shirt
- Do not put the ducklings in water or put water containers in with the ducklings. They will be OK without water for a couple hours. Ducklings are not fully waterproof and without their mother's help they can get wet and die from the cold.
- Do not feed the ducklings; the wrong foods are dangerous!

## Step 2. Finding a family

- Families need to be the same species – mallards with mallards, Canada geese with Canada geese. See photos below to help ID your duckling or gosling's species.
- Families should be near where you found the ducklings/goslings. Do not transport them long distances or across state lines. You could accidentally spread Avian Influenza!
- Families need to have at least one baby, and it should be around the same size/age as the duckling/gosling you have.
- Families need to be on land and you need to be able to get reasonably close (at least 15 feet). They can be near the water but not in the water away from shore

## Step 3. Introducing the family

- Get as close to the family as you can without them running/hissing
- MALLARDS ONLY: throw a handful of food (cracked corn, dried mealworms, domestic chicken/duck feed are all ok). Wait until the mother and/or ducklings are interested/distracted by the food.
- Release the ducklings/goslings near the family and step away. The babies will almost always run straight toward the family.

## Step 4. Observe & Recapture if fostering fails

- If the duckling/gosling runs back toward you rather than toward the family, the foster attempt has failed.
- If the attempt appears successful (the new babies join the family), stay and watch from a distance for at least 10 minutes. Danger signs include aggression from mom or new siblings, or being left behind.
- If fostering is unsuccessful, then you will need to bring the ducklings/goslings to the nearest ODFW office for humane euthanasia. Please call ahead.

### Portland Audubon Wildlife Care Center

503-292-0304 | Email: [wildlife@audubonportland.org](mailto:wildlife@audubonportland.org)

### OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH & WILDLIFE

Sauvie Island ODFW Office  
18330 NW Sauvie Island Road  
Portland OR 97231  
503-621-3488

Clackamas ODFW Office  
17330 SE Evelyn Street  
Clackamas OR 97015  
971-673-6000



**Canada Goose:** yellow & gray, indistinct markings, large



**Mallard:** yellow & darker brown, dark eye stripe continues from base of bill to back of head



**Wood Duck:** whitish yellow & dark brown, eye line from back corner of eye to back of head only



**Mergansers & others:** call or email the Wildlife Care Center to consult if the ducklings don't look like any of the three most common species