

# STARTING TO SHOW DOMESTIC WATERFOWL

## INFORMATION SHEET

Showing waterfowl can prove to be both interesting and enjoyable and, although time consuming, is satisfying and can lead to many new friendships.

Before starting to show, it is advisable to visit a Show to gain experience of etiquette and procedures. The BWA Secretary, the BWA Show Secretary or your County Representative will be able to put you in touch with an enthusiast or Club in your area. You need to obtain a schedule and submit an entry form in order to show your birds at any Show. There are Waterfowl sections at most Poultry and Agricultural Shows and there are a number of all-waterfowl shows, including the BWA's Champion Waterfowl Show. Smaller Shows may only stage individual classes for the popular breeds, other breeds being grouped under Any Other Variety classes.

The British Waterfowl Standards book, available from the BWA bookshop, contains a description of each breed and the scale of points that are used in judging. It is helpful to be familiar with the Standard for the particular breed you plan to show and to know their characteristics. Further information on the different breeds can be found on the BWA website.

### Selection

It is always wise to buy your initial stock from a proven specialist breeder, as good birds cost no more to feed than average ones. Also obtain an assurance that the birds are from pure bred stock. It is worth considering keeping a breed that is in a minority as you will not only be helping to promote the breed but also you are more likely to win a prize card at shows that stage classes for all breeds.

### Preparation

To be successful, your birds need to be in prime condition and well prepared. For a few days prior to a Show it is advisable to keep ducks in a house with a good dry litter of clean straw or wood shavings and a bowl of water. The white varieties of Waterfowl are more difficult to present than coloured ones, though with access to swimming water they will keep themselves clean. Geese are generally best if left outside.



The birds need to be used to being penned, so that they are not nervous and display themselves well for judging. Two or three training pens set about three feet above the ground will also serve as hospital or isolation pens. Feed and water the birds for a few days in the pens. Talk to them and offer them worms and similar titbits to keep them alert and interested. Geese tend to show themselves proudly in a show pen and do not need training unless they are nervous.

The day or evening before a show, check your birds carefully. Remove any non-closed leg rings and give them clean bedding and water. Wipe them down with a damp cloth and clean their beaks. The legs and feet can be scrubbed gently with a nailbrush and warm water and a trace of baby oil can be rubbed into the skin.

Once the ducks are prepared, it is important to ensure that they travel in the best conditions and comfort. A sturdy cardboard or wooden box, or a wicker hamper of an appropriate size, are most suitable. Ventilation holes are necessary on all sides and there should be plenty of clean litter. It is usually your responsibility to feed and water your birds after judging, so take some shallow bowls, some water and some food with you.

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### Exhibition

On the morning of the show, allow your birds to have a small feed and drink, but remember, if they are a little hungry they will look more alert. Some breeds, particularly Indian Runners, should not be presented with bulging crops.

Catch your birds with as little disturbance as possible and place them in their boxes. Record which bird is in each box. Check that you have a record of your entries and pen numbers.

Take your time when penning your birds and make sure that you have the correct bird in each pen. Some exhibitors spray their birds lightly with water from a plant sprayer which will encourage preening and settle feathers ruffled during handling.



You will then be able to meet other exhibitors and breeders while judges are working. Individual class winners are put forward for possible Best of Breed and subsequently the Best Waterfowl in Show. You will be allowed to feed and water your birds when judging is completed, and prize cards have been placed.

### Judging

Do not expect to win prize cards on your first outing. If you do, accept your good luck gracefully, but do not be disappointed if the same bird does not win in the next show. A bird reaches the peak of condition and then tails off. Also, the standard of opposition will vary.

It is acceptable to approach the judge when he (she) has completed his work to ask him to explain his decisions. This is a good way of improving your knowledge. Do not be aggressive in your approach and do not be afraid to stress that you are a novice. You are far more likely to be given constructive advice and guidance with your chosen breeds because the judge must, at some time, have kept the breeds he is judging. Do your best and show your best. Give your birds every chance to win by paying attention to their preparation. Enjoy showing, but do not take it too seriously. Above all, enjoy your ducks.

This leaflet is only a brief introduction and the successful husbandry of all livestock depends on being well informed about them. The BWA Bookshop sells a number of specialist publications which cover all aspects of keeping both Wildfowl and Domestic Waterfowl. All new keepers are strongly advised to obtain a book appropriate to their interest.

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